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THE WOMAN CHARACTER IN CHAUCER'S EARLY NARRATIVES

by



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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled: "The Woman Character in Chaucer's Early Narratives," submitted by James W. Fox in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.





## ABSTRACT

The lyf so short, the craft so long to lerne. . .  
(The Parlement of Foules, l. 1)

Though Chaucer seems to be suggesting that poetic skill is learned through practice, it would be dangerous to forge his genius in characterization into a neat, step by step development. Not only would such an ordering be grossly inaccurate but it would also encourage an undervaluing of Chaucer's early works: and who is willing to dismiss their characterizations as immature preliminaries? In my study of the women characters (my own emphasis on the woman accords with Chaucer's), Blanche, Dido, Anelida, and Criseyde, I do not deduce a simple practice-makes-Criseyde axiom. To speak of Criseyde as artistically superior to the other women characters is not the point: each is defined for and fulfills different narrative requirements. To speak of Criseyde as artistically more complex is an entirely different matter; and I attempt to define the meaning of complexity in Chaucer's technique of characterization through a close examination of the early women characters. I argue that Chaucer's brilliance in characterization



rests not so much in his reputed anticipation of representationalism or psychological complexity (as post-Victorian critics seem to suggest) nor in his humanization of Christian doctrine or allegorical complexity (as recent medieval scholars suggest) but in his artistic complexity. Chaucer saw that character could be shaped to meet the various demands of his poetic vision.



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## INTRODUCTION

We have all read book jackets acclaiming Criseyde as the first psychological character and the Canterbury pilgrims as individuated to a degree unmatched in medieval literature. We may have had Chaucer's technique of characterization neatly summarized by literary historians so that we see him as the first representational artist, a modern man in medieval times: one of those convenient transitional figures who makes history neat and orderly.

Some of us may be familiar with the works of D. W. Robertson, Robert Jordan,<sup>1</sup> and other medieval scholars who seem to reduce Chaucer's skills in characterization to fit his own time. And this is a neat and orderly way of classifying Chaucer too. If he was not an anomaly who anticipated the representational character of later ages, he was a medieval man whose characters are illustrative of Christian doctrine. Thus, Chaucer's characters are seen as neither organically nor psychologically representational, but rather touched with a realism capable of making the morality of the work more attractive.

This study does not attempt to resolve the debate:





rather it attempts to show that the debate is not resolvable. A close study of Chaucer's early women characters should indicate that Chaucer's characters cannot be classed under either a modern aesthetic of representationalism or a medieval aesthetic of allegoria. What should become apparent is that Chaucer conceives of characterization not in terms of any broad aesthetic but in terms of the particular demands of his narrative. He is a narrative poet, and more concerned with the story or plot than character per se. It is his versatility in shaping characters to fulfill the precise requirements of his works--not his anticipation of the wave of representationalism--that is his artistic brilliance in characterization.

The complexity of his characters is not necessarily psychological nor allegorical. Dido's characterization, for example, is an artistic means of exemplifying the sentimental and courtly attitude of her narrator. The Duchess' characterization is essentially a commentary on womanly noblesse, and Chaucer is careful not to voice it himself. In giving it to the voice of her bereaved lover, he vivifies the ideality of the Duchess in a way that is neither sentimental nor improbable; at the same time, he allows the character of the lover to emerge in his description. Both Dido and the Duchess, then, are complex not because they function as independent units in



a cause and effect world of behavior and development and are psychologically real, but because their characterizations function as part of a more important and more immediate character: in one case the narrator and in the other, the lover.

There are, of course, characters who rather neatly walk the artistic tightrope between illustration and representation. Criseyde, for example, occasionally mouths arguments directly from Boethius, but Chaucer's genius is able to touch them with Criseyde's own personality.

I have chosen to focus on the woman in the early poems for a number of reasons: first, the variety of techniques Chaucer uses in characterization in the early poems, particularly with the women; second, the fact that the major characters in the early poems are female: Dido is more important than Aeneas whose characterization is left flat because the narrator is less interested in heroism than love; Anelida is more important than Arcite who is dismissed once he has fulfilled the requirement of the plot--his betrayal; the Duchess even seems more important than the Knight because it is his description of her that brings his own character to life. (Pandarus, Troilus, and a narrator-persona who is consistently naive and inexperienced in love are male characters of major importance and therefore will be considered when relevant



to the characterization of the women.) Third, a consideration of the woman character would certainly lead to an examination of Chaucer's themes of love: his themes which may appear as varied as his women characters, are, in fact, constantly concerned with the nature of human love and divine love.

A fourth reason is the social and literary background which doubtlessly helped shape Chaucer's impression of the woman and his use of her in literature. In a sense Chaucer's use of the woman character which places her in no single conventional role nor single narrative function, is a reflection of the position of the woman at the time he was writing: it was undefined.

The status of the woman in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was rising. Legally she assumed more power in matters of inheritance and marriage; socially she learned to 'sing and say', to polish her imagination, to conduct her life--and love--in a highly formal and civilized way.<sup>2</sup> W. T. H. Jackson has concluded, I think too easily, that: "There can be little doubt that one of the principal 'civilizing' influences upon the medieval court was the increasing power of women."<sup>3</sup>

But was the court really civilized? Though a change in manners and morals is important, one must be careful not to exaggerate it. Husbands still beat their wives, and the tradition established by such misogynists





as St. Paul and St. Jerome that "woman is the gate of the devil, the path of wickedness, the sting of the serpent, in a word a perilous object"<sup>4</sup> would find painful expression in the witch-hunt mania of the later Middle Ages.<sup>5</sup>

In my study of the women characters I have purposely excluded allegorical abstractions who are quite clearly illustrations, and consequently more reducible than the other women. I might note, however, that even abstractions such as Lady Fame in The Hous of Fame, and Nature in The Parlement of Foules, are touched by Chaucer's genius in characterization. Lady Fame's voice is as shrewish and inconsistent as the idea she illustrates; the low style of her words is decorously fitted to the shabbiness of the value she inspires in men; and for all this, she is still resplendent and attractive in a perverse sort of way. In her character Chaucer has artfully captured the appeal and viciousness of fame. Nature, as God's agent on earth, is given a calm voice of reconciliation. As a character who embodies Chaucer's belief in the principle of order, she is the one who is able to create order out of chaos; establish a hierarchy for the birds to position themselves by; and dictate a sequence for lovers to select their mates. And yet Chaucer's belief is so artfully embodied in the actions and voice of Nature, we do not see her simply as an illustration of some overriding





principle of universal order, but rather as a principle made human.

It is possible in the women I will consider to see some development of Chaucer's craft. Though I do not think it is possible to systematize a genius as rare as Chaucer's, or prove a simplistic 'practice-makes-Criseyde' axiom, I do think a close study of the women characters indicates a growing awareness and an increased complexity. Made concrete, this development is the difference between Blanche and Criseyde. Blanche is static and as an exemplification of her lover's attitude she is important in developing his character. She is not dramatized but distanced from the action of the poem. Criseyde is dramatized through action and speech, and yet her character, though in a different way than Blanche's, is of peculiar importance to her narrator, and to a Chaucerian perspective on love. The difference will become more obvious when we can consider the women characters in detail.

If my thesis--that Chaucer's early women characters originate neither from a singularly modern nor medieval aesthetic, but that they do, in fact, evidence Chaucer's growing awareness about the possibilities of character to fit narrative--is defensible, then it seems that Chaucer cannot be considered a transitional artist, simply because his own artistic consciousness of

1. The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions and activities. It emphasizes that this is crucial for ensuring transparency and accountability in the organization's operations.

2. The second part of the document outlines the various methods and tools used to collect and analyze data. It mentions the use of surveys, interviews, and focus groups to gather information from stakeholders. Additionally, it discusses the use of statistical software to process and interpret the data collected.

3. The third part of the document describes the results of the data collection and analysis. It highlights the key findings and trends observed in the data. For example, it notes that there is a significant increase in customer satisfaction levels over the past year, which is attributed to the implementation of new service protocols.

4. The fourth part of the document discusses the implications of the findings and the recommendations for future actions. It suggests that the organization should continue to monitor customer satisfaction levels and implement further improvements to maintain and enhance the quality of service. It also recommends that the organization should consider expanding its data collection efforts to include more stakeholders and areas of the organization.

5. The fifth part of the document provides a conclusion and summarizes the main points of the report. It reiterates the importance of accurate record-keeping and data analysis in achieving the organization's goals and objectives.

6. The final part of the document includes a list of references and a list of appendices. The references list the sources of information used in the report, including books, articles, and online resources. The appendices contain additional information and data that support the findings and conclusions of the report.

character was always in transition. He works freely with both icons and humans; conventions and history; experience and imagination. No matter what its origin or effect Chaucer's mastery in characterization was that he could fit the character to the narrative whole.



## I

### THE BOOK OF THE DUCHESS

Blanche, Duchess of Lancaster and wife of John of Gaunt, died in 1369. The Book of the Duchess is an elegy occasioned by her death. (Literary historians date the work between 1369 and 1371). As Chaucer's first woman character, Blanche is not totally fictional, historical, nor realistic. True, she does have a factual basis, a real life source; but she is illustrative of womanly virtue. The historical Blanche is the inspiration for the idealized literary Blanche. How they relate is not the concern of this paper; that they relate can be assumed by the nature of elegy and the occasion of this poem. I will deal exclusively with the literary Blanche by considering Chaucer's technique in creating an idealized woman character.

Estimations of Chaucer's characterization of Blanche have been generally favorable. J. L. Lowes considered it "a Portrait of a lady unmatched (I think) save by Dante in medieval poetry".<sup>1</sup> James Russell Lowell admired Blanche's portrait as:

. . .one of the most beautiful portraits of a woman that were ever drawn. Full of life it is, and of graceful health, with no romantic hectic or sentimental languish.



It is such a figure as you would never look for in a ballroom, but might expect to meet in the dewy woods just after sunrise, when you were hunting for late violets.<sup>2</sup>

C. S. Lewis has considered the effectiveness of Blanche's characterization to be its ability to win belief:

Successful panegyric is the rarest of all literary achievements, and Chaucer has compassed it. I believe in the 'gode faire Whyte', as I have never believed in Edward King, or Arthur Hallam, or Clough. I seem to have seen her 'laughe and pley so wommanly' and to have heard 'which a goodly softe speche' she uttered; and now that she is dead I seem to realize with more poignancy how 'hir liste so wel to live that dulnesse was of hir a-drad.'<sup>3</sup>

Lewis has broadly considered Chaucer's mastery in elegiac characterization by suggesting that he personalizes his ideal woman. Even those critics who feel that Chaucer has drawn his characterization from various rhetorical precepts or practices, are quick to acknowledge Chaucer's own humanizing contributions. G. L. Kittredge, for example, believes:

. . .nowhere in the poem does his originality appear more strikingly than in the description of the Duchess Blanche, --the very place where his indebtedness is most conspicuous.<sup>4</sup>

Donald C. Baker, also aware of Chaucer's indebtedness, praises his ability to give the portrait life, and to offset the more gloomy themes of the poem:

. . .the most impressive of all this juxtaposition of life-and-death themes is the glowing portrait of the Duchess, conventionally rhetorical though it be, filled with vitality and life, against the background of desolation and despair caused by her death.<sup>5</sup>

Chaucer has given life to the conventions; in the same way







he hopes to give life to the Black Knight.

No doubt Chaucer was genuinely moved by the Duchess' death--a beautiful life lost so easily to the plague. He was probably equally concerned with its effect on his friend and patron, John of Gaunt. Be it in admiration of Gaunt or to most easily control his own sentiment, Chaucer distances his praise of Blanche by drawing it from the lips of a bereaved, dream-world knight.

The Duchess never appears to us directly, but surfaces as an ideal through her lover-knight's description. Only on two occasions does the Knight report the words his lady might have said or that she did say. For the most part, though, we are conscious of Death's hallowing distance and the voice of love attempting to regain its beloved. Our attention, then, in our consideration of the woman cannot be limited to the woman alone. How we react to her is dependent on the sympathies we extend the Knight--or more aptly how convincingly he wins them--in his grief. In praising the Duchess, the Knight's own character emerges and becomes an object of praise. Their love relationship is elevated.

The dream-world is not only a conventional frame for a love poem but is particularly suited to the elegiac characterization of the Duchess. First, a dream can claim more authority than a subjective lament. The Knight's



words of praise are hallowed in the dream-consciousness of the narrator. The audience sees the Duchess only at the end of the narrator-Knight-Duchess relationships, and then only indirectly. If objectivity comes with distance, then the audience's view seems somewhat authoritative. The praise of the Duchess is filtered into the narrative by a sympathetic and naive narrator who has not been directly affected by Blanche's death. Second, the dream origin of the elegy clears it of any contrivance: there does not seem to be a deliberate attempt on the part of the narrator or the mourning Knight to produce an elegy. Though the narrator in the Hous of Fame hypothesizes numerous causes of dreams, including diet, there seems little doubt that this particular dream of love derives from a spiritual source. The subject matter of the poem is very serious, and as Wolfgang Clemen points out, "the medieval Christian mind saw certain dreams as sent by God and thus as revealing objective truth."<sup>6</sup> The spiritual significance is not to be underestimated: traditionally the dream was the vehicle for prophecy. This dream about the Duchess is a visionary consideration of an idea--the nature of womanly noblesse--and as an idea, the meaning of Blanche's characterization transcends the particularities of her own corporeal existence. Finally, the dream allows for certain of the inconsistencies of the narrative, including



the puzzling narrator who in full knowledge of the reason for the Knight's grief (he overhears the Knight's lament) questions him about it throughout the poem. The dream can work free of any disciplined adherence to the realities of the common world. Thus the narrator who before the dream is numbed by love's sorrow (ll. 5-7)<sup>7</sup> can be transformed by the dream into a person who is sensitive to new sensations of sight, sound, and touch (ll. 335-343). Such inconsistencies are natural to the dream world and as Benjamin Harrison points out, the dream world is "an easy means of escaping the strict demands of unity and coherence."<sup>8</sup>

Our point of view becomes one with the narrator's as we confront the Knight directly. We sense the stirring of the Knight's emotion as conclusive evidence of the Duchess' presence, however ghostly, in the poem. Shrouded in death, veiled in grief and crystallized in memory, the Duchess becomes someone more ideal than real, yet fully credible through a lover's mourning eyes. We accept the ideal easily in the strange way we always glorify the dead. (Credibility is stretched by death: what we hesitate to believe of the living, we make legends of to honor the dead.) This range of sympathies is, of course, totally consistent with medieval religious orthodoxy. A person who had died and had lived a good life was worthy of adulation. The Duchess' life in par-





taking of the Ideal loses most of its individuality and humanness, and offers itself as an exemplum for mortals.

Since the sincerity of the Knight's grief is essential in winning our sentiment for his lady, and since Blanche as an exemplification of the Knight's ideal woman is used artistically to develop his character, we shall consider what we know about him. He is titled and dressed in black, the traditional color of mourning. In making his character even more obvious, he refers to himself as "sorwe" (l. 597). But these direct identifications are not what win our sympathies. We are more impressed with his actions and his speech.

When the narrator approaches, the Knight is unaware of his presence. Though he is voicing a lament and conventionally poeticizing his grief, there is a quality of sincerity and simplicity about it: he is speaking for no one but himself and "withoute song" (l. 472). He becomes silent when he is made aware of the narrator's presence. When he is finally coaxed into talking, the Knight demands total attention, underscoring the seriousness of his words. In telling us about the Duchess, we learn much about him. We learn this not so much from what he says but from how he says it. The poetic techniques he wields in a disconnected delivery suggest the extent of his efforts to describe and praise the Duchess. He exhausts his poetic talents





and in modest self-awareness admits failure in his craft:

Allas! myn herte ys wonder woo  
 That I ne kan discryven hyt!  
 Me lakketh both Englyssh and wit  
 For to undo hyt at the fulle;  
 And eke my spirites be so dulle  
 So gret a thyng for to devyse.  
 (11. 896-901)

His grief and subject matter have led him to the limits of language, testifying more to the power of his emotion than to the weakness of his poetic skills. We are won by his easy honesty and his ability to distinguish between his beloved and his art--a not too frequent accomplishment of courtly love poets. Our awareness of the sincerity and magnitude of his grief springs from our trust in the words he speaks about the Duchess. "Faire White", the cause of this intense and rare emotion, was apparently real: her effect is so real.

The Duchess is dead but locked in the Knight's memory. She is not lost. In death and without the awareness of her lover, she has worked some hopeful change in him. The action the Knight undertakes in creating her elegy demands recall and with this, as G. L. Kittredge has pointed out, comes consolation.<sup>9</sup> The consolation becomes evident in the Knight's tonal shifts in the poem. The Knight, who is first unwilling to speak, moves agilely from a consideration of his grief to a consideration of his lady, to the final identification of his grief. (I can't fail to cite the



power of his lean, last statement: "she ys ded!", 1. 1309.) We can accent the contrast of the Knight's initial silence with the fluidity (not without breakdowns) of his later speech. From helplessness the Knight has waxed creative. Though he is grieving, memory has rekindled an interest in life--in what once was and the pleasure to be gained in recall. His deathly silence is broken and as he remembers, he creates. He is willing to talk at length and in his desire for linguistic precision and his denial of subjectivity in the description ("alle that hir seyen/ Seyde and sworn hyt was so," ll. 1052-1053) we sense a regained vitality and confidence.

Stephen Spender in his essay, "The Making of a Poem", has identified memory far more lucidly than I, as a source of endless mental nourishment and consolation. It is here that the Duchess' wealth lies ever-ready to be tapped:

A memory once clearly stated ceases to be a memory, it becomes perpetually present, because every time we experience something which recalls it, the clear and lucid original experience imposes its formal beauty on the new experiences. It is thus no longer memory but an experience lived through again and again.<sup>10</sup>

The narrator allows us to interpret the Knight's words with very little interruption. The Knight begins with a description of his incurable sorrow. He alludes to other great mourners in history so that we might more fully understand his loss. In a submerged metaphor suggestive of the turning wheel of Fortune, the Knight



tells us how his "song ys turned to pleynynge" (l. 599). Fortune, whom he compares to the insidious scorpion, has beaten him in a game of chess and has "tok my fers" (l. 654), a prize the Knight would have accepted as willingly had he been victorious: "Myself I wolde have do the same" (l. 676).

Whether the chess game is some arcane history of events in the Duchess' life is not for me to determine. What can be said, however, is that the general statement of the metaphor--that life, like chess, is a game we all must play, however risky and delusive our position, and ultimately lose to Fortune--is an exemplification of the limited worldly view of the Knight. His understanding of happiness is strictly worldly: "'Farewel, swete, ywys,/ And farewel al that ever ther ys!'" (ll. 657-658). His metaphor links the abstract and baffling condition of Death with the concrete and trivial experience of a chess game. The correspondence is false: both Death and chess partake of the greater idea of Loss, but since life is not a game, and since Fortune is only Providence misunderstood, the two are in no sense equivalent. The mind that forges them into metaphoric union is one of little faith. Still, Chaucer does not give the metaphor to his Knight merely to allow him to voice his own condemnation. The metaphor, though a conventional one, is in its context poignant, allowing





every reader to understand and sympathize with the limitations of the Knight's view. His misinterpretation of events, his false metaphors, make the nature of his loss real for us. His language is the language of grief.

Following the consideration of his grief the Knight describes his lady. James Wimsatt has noted a meaningful sequence in the portrait. He suggests that Chaucer in contrast to courtly convention does not proceed from one physical quality to the next. This "easy gliding from physical description to character ("moral") description was in accord neither with examples provided by the rhetoricians nor with the practice of Guillaume de Machaut in the poems which provided Chaucer's sources."<sup>11</sup>

There are, of course, obvious uses of the courtly conventions in the portrait. Chaucer was aware of the value of conventions: without them he could not do justice to the Duchess who was a courtly woman, who could "daunce so comlily,/ Carole and synge so swetely" (ll. 848-849). Too many critics, however, have not correctly observed the sequence and emphasis of the portrait, and have stressed the courtliness of Blanche and her lover. To stop where B. H. Bronson does by calling Blanche and the Knight "ideal courtly lovers"<sup>12</sup> or to consider the poem with H. O. Patch "full of the high frivolity of courtly love"<sup>13</sup> is to miss the more serious and Christian element which is clearly a part of





any Chaucerian consideration of ideality. What is noteworthy and singularly unconventional is the brevity with which Chaucer's Knight treats his lady's physical description. Even in descriptions ostensibly of physical qualities we are nearly always conscious of their moral relation in her total character. Rather than considering the artistic sequence, ably described by Wimsatt, I would like to make evident a unity which emerges in the blending of physical qualities with moral meaning.

The notion of physical beauty as an indication of moral beauty is at least as old as Plato. The ideal nature of the description of the Duchess leads Chaucer to a consideration of perfection where Beauty finds harmonious expression both in the physical and moral characteristics of the person. Chaucer's Knight recognizes this harmony and invests the external physical qualities of his lady with moral beauty.

As soon as we learn his lady's name--"goode faire White" (l. 948)--we are aware of her fundamental moral texture. The denotations of her name may be confined to physical meaning--fair, white skin, the ideal courtly complexion. The connotations, however, allow for rich moral suggestions. The Knight underscores this allowance when he exchanges white with "bryghte": "She was bothe fair and bryghte" (l. 950). Furthermore, in weighing the Duchess' total nature against all the



implied meaning of her name, the Knight concludes: "She hadde not her name wrong." (l. 951). Stephen Manning has pointed out--not to the surprise of twentieth-century wedding-goers--that the medieval lady in both love song and romance is always white and that the color has spiritual significance.<sup>14</sup> In short, the color imagery --white and bright--used both in name and in description of the Duchess, carries parallel meanings of physical and moral beauty.

Let us consider the multiple moral-physical meanings in the general, descriptive statement. We learn the Duchess had "stedfaste countenaunce" and "noble port" and "meyntenaunce" (ll. 833-834). Physical qualities--countenance, comportment and demeanor--are expressive of the moral nature of the Duchess. "Noble" and "stedfaste" are moral terms for Chaucer. To stress this point we might consider the meaning he attaches to them in two of his ballads. In "Gentilesse" he observes: ". . .ther may no man, as men may wel see,/ Bequethe his heir his vertuous noblesse." (ll. 16-17). Nobility is a rare, inner quality. In another of his ballads, "Lak of Stedfastnesse", Chaucer sees the moral failure of the world as the result of the breakdown in personal, moral rectitude which the title implies (l. 21). Both qualities--nobility and steadfastness--are evident in the Duchess' physical being.



The Duchess' eyes are endowed with moral signification. We learn they are "debonaire, goode, gladde, and sadde,/ Symple of good mochel, noght to wyde" (ll. 860-861). An underlying notion of measure, the great classical virtue, is evident here as well as in a later description of her eyes and their accord with Nature:

Hyt was hir owne pure lokyng  
That the goddesse, dame Nature,  
Had made hem opene by mesure,  
And close.

(ll. 870-873)

The face of the Duchess carried no "wikked sygne;/ For hit was sad, symple, and benygne." (l. 918)--fitting commentary on her total character. The Knight also stresses Nature's role as artisan in hewing her face:

And nigh hir face was alderbest;  
For certes, Nature had swich lest  
To make that fair, that trewly she  
Was hir chefe patron of beaute  
And chefe ensample of al hir werke,  
And moustre;

(ll. 907-912)

Where a physical quality does not offer itself to such character suggestion, the Knight dismisses it quickly. The throat, body, arms, hips, hands, breasts, and back rate little mention (ll. 939-957). (The hips being not of correct courtly dimension add a comic touch of realism). In short, the description is clearly not sensual.

Character is not only revealed in the multiple suggestions of the moral-physical descriptive statement.





This general and often hyperbolic statement is supported by particular actions of the Duchess. The actions not only make the statement appropriate and increase our belief in "faire White", but they also suggest a Chaucerian notion of virtue. Virtue and beauty must serve some use. Indeed, they are defined by the test of experience. The Duchess' beauty has functioned; it has won its honor in experience. Not only was the Duchess good, but she did good as well.

We have moved from physical qualities shaded with moral meaning to our present consideration of the use the Duchess gave them. Her face was beautiful and through it speech functioned properly. Her words were "goodly" (l. 919) and "softe" (l. 919) and "friendly" (l. 921). Her speech excelled the pope's song (l. 929). It never "man ne woman gretly harmed" (l. 931). She avoided all misuses of speech including flattery, chiding and lies (ll. 930-939).

Her eyes never functioned in extremes: "hir look nas not asyde" (l. 862). Her look expressed purity and sincerity: "Hyt was no countrefeted thyng" (l. 869). Her reason was used "to do wel" (ll. 1011-1013). And, since she was a courtly lady, her body was well practiced in the courtly arts of dancing, singing and caroling (ll. 848-854).

Propriety is the key to the Duchess' character.





She was a master of the Aristotelean mean, and lived in complete accord with Nature. Her moderate actions were appropriate to any occasion. For example, she did not offer the Knight her love until she had tested his sincerity with time (ll. 1146-1148). She was always conscious of the effect an action would have on her name (ll. 1015-1018; ll. 1262-1263). (Such concern for reputation may seem petty to some in our libertine age, but its force is not to be underestimated among most cultures and periods of history.) We are made even more aware of the nature of the Duchess' commitment to name with an allusion to Lucrece, the very incarnation of the value of reputation (l. 1082).

In accordance with the meanings implicit in her name, the Duchess' actions were pure. She did not act out life by rote. True, she practiced courtly charm, but actions that revealed the inner character were personal and honest. Therefore, she rejected the conventional role of Lady Disdain, replacing ridiculous tests of the physical prowess of her lover with a more reasonable wait-and-see test of sincerity (ll. 1015-1033). Her characteristic caution, however, was apparently tempered by trust not suspicion: "She loved as man may do his brother" (l. 892). Though arrived at cautiously she accepted her decisions totally. The ring she gave to the Knight, a traditional symbol of fidelity, was wrought of



the cautious test of time (l. 1274). His love, having been proved stable, was worthy of her total acceptance.

One might argue that the propriety which marked her actions loses its force in the illicit basis of the relationship. As far as I can determine there is no mention of marriage in the poem. (References to "wyf" carry the Middle English meaning of "woman"). Still, the descriptive emphasis on the moral nature of the Duchess should outlaw any erotic or impure reading of the poem. Nothing in the poem cheapens the lady or the love relationship. The Knight rejects "nede" (with its obvious sexual meaning) as having been crucial to their love (ll. 1075-1076). How we react to the illicit nature of their love depends upon our own social values. But we should not confuse them with the norm of the medieval world.

It has been argued that adultery was the norm of courtly love. Kemp Malone, for example, not only assumes that adultery was conventional, but that Chaucer felt forced into skirting fact in order to uphold the convention:

John of Gaunt's happy marriage with Blanche could not be represented as such but had to be turned into an extra-marital love affair for the sake of conformity to the conventions of courtly love.<sup>15</sup>

In light of such non-adulterous heroes of romance as Erec, Yvain and Perzival,<sup>16</sup> Malone's point seems highly contentious. Furthermore, one wonders if many of these



theories on the adulterous nature of courtly love derive from a reductive reading of Andreas Capellanus' The Art of Courtly Love. Capellanus must always remain an enigma. His statements on adulterous love in the eighth dialogue<sup>17</sup> are retracted in his final book. One can take from him what one wants, depending on the way in which one chooses to direct the irony. Since Chaucer did not consider marriage an issue in the relationship of the Knight and the Duchess, we need not consider it one either.

The figurative language of the poem adds extensive moral and physical description. Metaphors, similes, and allusions rich in association combine to broaden our comprehension of the Duchess. Wimsatt has noted that the use of Marian simile and allusion in the elegy establish a similarity between the Duchess and Mary. According to Wimsatt it is

. . .inevitable that the description of a beautiful lady should have many points of similarity with the descriptions of the Blessed Virgin, for the Virgin traditionally represented the perfection of womanhood, not only in her qualities of character, but also in her qualities of physical beauty. This was a matter of very old tradition in the Church: St. Ambrose, for example, in the fourth century asserted that Mary's physical appearance reflected her inner perfection.<sup>18</sup>

This latter observation I have already made with regard to the Duchess.

Marian similes according to Wimsatt include the sun (l. 821), a symbol in such works as Adam St. Victor's hymn on the Nativity of the Virgin; the throat as the





"tour of yvorye" (l. 946); and the Phoenix (l. 982) which is normally associated with Christ but which equally captures the regenerative nature of Mary's Assumption.<sup>19</sup>

Wimsatt has identified Marian references in Wisdom 7:26 as probable sources for Chaucer's torch (l. 963) and mirror (l. 974) similes.<sup>20</sup> He sees the poem's allusion to Esther (l. 987) as another link with Mary, since Esther was the Biblical precursor of Mary.<sup>21</sup>

Wimsatt gives convincing argument. I concur with his conclusion that insofar as any woman partakes of perfect womanhood, she necessarily partakes of Mary's nature. The Duchess' likeness to Mary is made obvious not only in simile but in description of her actions and being as well. Wimsatt infers that Chaucer was probably one of the first poets to make use of Marian imagery in an essentially secular writing:

But if the Virgin is often described in secular terms in sacred poetry, the inverse--the description of the courtly beloved in patently Marian terms--seems not to have been common before Chaucer.<sup>22</sup>

It is interesting to note, however, that none other than Andreas Capellanus, the champion of courtly love, used similes remarkably similar to those of Wisdom 7:26 and Chaucer. Capellanus' use of them may have influenced Chaucer. Referring to the courtly woman, Capellanus says:

For if their brightness were to give light to anyone, it would be like a candle hidden under a bushel whose beam is not to drive away darkness or shine to anyone's profit.





Therefore it is clear that everyman should strive with all his might to be of service to ladies that he may shine by their grace.<sup>23</sup>

It would be a mistake to pass off the figurative language of the poem to its historical analogues. It has meaning in itself, in the visual or associative effect it produces and in how aptly that effect increases our awareness of the Duchess.

Adopting this attitude we can once again turn to the first important simile--the "somere's sun" (l. 821). The suggestions this simile makes may be enhanced by our knowledge of the Copernican, heliocentric theory, but adherence to the proper medieval perspective makes this consideration indefensible. Medieval perspective does allow, however, for associations of the sun's brightness, warmth and stature to be made with the Duchess. The sun's brightness distinguishes it from the planets; the Duchess is similarly distinguished from her peers. The Duchess' position in relation to her peers corresponds to the sun's position. She "surmounted hem alle of beaute" (l. 826).

To illustrate the wealth of association present in this last observation on position, I will risk becoming impressionistic. The association of the woman with the sun depends on the meaning of 'surmount', a word, I feel, which is particularly descriptive of the sun. If we allow that surmounting involves the rising of something above



something else, we can see possibilities for association. The medieval man doubtlessly considered the sun to be above the earth and thus endowed with a superior position in the heavens, a higher link in the divine, cosmic chain. In the same way, the divine, natural order has given the Duchess a position above her peers. The sun's and Duchess' superiority is defined by their natures. It is not arrogance.

With the sun simile our consciousness of light imagery is intensified. We recall all previous references to color and brightness and their meaning for the Duchess' character. Her moral and physical superiority give her "more lyght/ Than any other planete in heven" (11. 822-823).

The torch simile (1. 963), with obvious reference to light, underscores the Duchess' role as illuminatrix. She serves as an example for men, if men "had eyen hir to beholde" (1. 970). She loses nothing in providing example; like a torch she gives fire to as many as need it, but never loses power, never suffers loss (11. 964-965).

The Duchess "wolde have be, at the leste,/ A chef myrour of al the feste" (11. 973-974). The mirror too is endowed with properties of light and lighting. But the central association of this metaphor is the reflective properties of the Duchess. She reflects



"al the feste". The magnitude and source for her image are identified, but their significance remains somewhat obscure to me. Perhaps a clue is to be found in the connotations of the word feast--a time of joy and celebration, generally of religious or political significance. As a special occasion it pays honor to someone or something. The Duchess, therefore, is considered singularly worthy of reflecting all the honor, joy, and celebration of the feast.

It should be obvious now that a reading of the figurative language of the poem is not limited to religious connotations. Disregarding its Marian suggestion, let us consider the material quality of "tour of yvorye" (l. 946)--itself suggestive of the "fers" of the chess game--that makes it particularly descriptive of the Duchess' throat. We already know that she is fair and white; ivory connoting smoothness, whiteness and value, is an image consistent with her complete person. The Duchess is also compared to a "blysfyl tresore" (l. 854) and the stones of a crown (l. 980).

Obviously Chaucer's Knight is not equating material worth with the human, spiritual value of the Duchess. A correspondence, however, is perceived: both partake of the greater idea of Value. Each offers the audience possible clarification of the other.

Allusions are made to Esther (l. 987), Penelope (l. 1081), and Lucrece (l. 1082). It is surely no





accident that each represents a different cultural tradition: Hebraic, Greek and Roman. Each is a feminine ideal of her culture. None is really Christian.

Chaucer's notion of ideality, then, is not limited by his Christian perspective, but instead is drawn from all history. His ideal woman--the Duchess--rates comparison to the great women of all history. The ideal transcends considerations of time and culture.

In summary, "Trouthe" found his "restynge place" in the Duchess (ll. 1003-1005). The totality of this statement may be immediately obvious if we reflect upon the elegy, but E. E. Slaughter offers convenient summary in an essay on The Parlement of Foules of the ways virtue can be at rest:<sup>24</sup>

- 1) at its highest point
- 2) by belonging to the person
- 3) when they are in working harmony with all other virtues
- 4) having triumphed over vice
- 5) when they sustain a person as a perfect lover

Blanche of Lancaster, as an embodiment of this Ideal, may have transcended time and history: she may have been beatified in heaven--Chaucer does not say. But like Esther, Penelope and Lucrece, her immortality on earth depends on the genius of her poet. Chaucer may keep her alive forever.

The complexity of the Duchess' characterization should now be apparent. It is not only an expansion of





the particular goodness of Blanche of Lancaster to a general ideal of womanhood, but also an artistic technique for characterizing her lover. Her characterization has been stirred to life by his own creative impulse and consequently reflects his character. He may emphasize certain characteristics of the Duchess: the nature of his emphasis reveals his values. Or, he may recount certain actions of the Duchess: those he selects reveal his interests. Thus, the character of the Knight is submerged in his characterization of the Duchess. The poem is finally as much a compliment to the Knight as to the Duchess.



## II

### THE HOUS OF FAME

Chaucer's characterization of Dido in The Hous of Fame has often been misunderstood or ignored. Paull F. Baum suggests that "the relevance of the summary of the Aeneid to the rest of the poem is not obvious," and then dismisses the summary as "conventional in such vision poetry."<sup>1</sup> Charles Muscatine, following a similar line of argument, sees the Dido episode as a reflection of conventional medieval attitudes toward classical love. He states that "the main characteristic of the Dido episode is the usual medieval reduction of the classical tale to something more mundane and compendious and, withal, more moralized."<sup>2</sup> To locate conventions in Chaucer, however, is not really to understand them because Chaucer uses conventions for his own artistic effect; he makes the Dido episode meaningful to the poem as a whole.

Other critics have noted a thematic link between the Dido episode and the rest of the poem. Alfred David points out that "Dido's sad story has precisely the same ironic moral that may be learned at the court of fame."<sup>3</sup> H. O. Patch in noting the genealogical re-



lationship between the goddesses, Venus, Fame, and Fortuna,<sup>4</sup> has laid the groundwork for the conclusion of Paul Ruggiers:

Further, by structural analogy with The Book of the Duchess and The Parlement of Foules where Chaucer's method is to juxtapose a preliminary reading from a book with the ensuing vision for purposes of profounder implication and meaning, The Hous of Fame provides us with a specific account of Dido caught in the contrivances of Venus, or the fortunes of love and of Fame, as an introduction to what "Geffrey" is to behold in the third book, the goddess Fame doling out her favor and disfavor with random caprice to mankind, in manners of love, as well as in the countless other pursuits of men.<sup>5</sup>

J. A. W. Bennett argues similarly that the Aeneid episode serves "obliquely to introduce the twin themes of the rest of the poem: the nature of 'Fame' and the search for 'tidings of loves folk.'"<sup>6</sup> Without question the Dido episode is linked thematically with the rest of the poem, but it is far more than a simple statement of theme. In fact, the characterization of Dido, since it cannot be considered independently of her narrator-dreamer, is a means of developing his character (the nature of a poet) which is a major--if not the major--concern of the poem. As he imagines himself into the mural, Dido becomes a projection of the narrator's own attitudes toward love, and of his poetic sensibility.

In this study I would like to consider Chaucer's use of the character Dido who serves principally as voice for the narrator-persona, but at the same time appears to





be a separate and real-life presence in the poem.

Wolfgang Clemen has correctly identified the relationship of the dreamer-poet to his dream-world:

What is seen in the dream is not presented as a complete picture but as if observed by someone gradually growing aware of new surroundings and making discoveries step by step. Chaucer shows his narrative skill by setting before us not only a 'narrator' but a man in the act of seeing and hearing, approaching things in his own way and taking them in by degrees.<sup>7</sup>

Clemen has recognized not only the distinction between Chaucer and his poet, but also the subjectivity of the dreamer's view. Both are important in considering Dido.

Though the eagle refers to the narrator as "Geffrey", it would be ludicrous to argue that the naive persona is, in fact, Geffrey Chaucer. Obviously Chaucer closely associates himself with the narrator as a means of amusing his oral audiences. In the Dido episode, the separation of persona and poet occasions irony. Too few critics have been careful to draw a distinction between Chaucer and his persona, and consequently the persona's sympathy for and reduction of Dido is taken as Chaucer's own. Such a distinction is essential to an understanding of the episode and what meaning it has within the context of the two major themes of the poem: love and art.

The subjectivity of the dreamer's vision is also important to the characterization of Dido. Thomas Jameson, though commenting on the directions of modern criticism, might as well be describing the impression-





istic quality of the narrator's reaction to Dido:

It is plain that if a work of art is now assumed to lie in some aesthetic field of force rather than in simple location in space, then any sort of individualistic handling will produce new forces sufficient to throw off all the traditional 'calculations' during the period of observation.<sup>8</sup>

Certainly the response of the dreamer-narrator throws off all classical calculations: Dido's characterization becomes blurred with the character of the persona.

As the persona enters the Temple he is not sure of its identity. Only later is he able to deduce that he is in the Temple of Venus. Since nothing is very clear and the narrator is groping for understanding, we are always conscious of his presence in the descriptions. His presence is obvious and important when he sees the mural. The nature of his contact with the mural is stressed. He repeats often: "I saugh" (l. 150; l. 162; l. 174; l. 198; l. 209; l. 212; l. 219; l. 221). But when he arrives at the Dido episode, he is able not only to see but hear as well. It seems unlikely that the narrator is reading the soliloquies of Dido; at least he makes no mention that he is. Dido seems to appear directly in the poem. That is, much of her speech is directed to the audience without commentary by the narrator. At the same time, the narrator reminds us of her relationship to him:

In suche wordes gan to pleyne  
Dido of hir grete peyne,



As me mette redely;  
 Non other auctour alegge I.  
 (I, 311-314)

His dream has been responsible for her characterization. The atmosphere of unreality that permits him both to see and hear Dido is thereby allowed. But to merely allow it is, I think, to miss the point. Dido's characterization is a projection of the narrator's own attitudes, and this is being suggested by the nature of the involvement of the narrator and the mural; the relationship of the perceiver to the art object. The epic tale is being tainted with the sentimentality of the persona.

The moralizing comments of the narrator suggest his sympathies for Dido. Virgil does all he can to vindicate his hero; the narrator does all he can to condemn his villain:

Therefore be no wight so nyce,  
 To take a love oonly for chere,  
 Or speche, or for frendly manere,  
 For this shal every woman fynde,  
 That som man, of his pure kynde,  
 Wol shewen outward the fayreste,  
 Tyl he have caught that what him leste;  
 And thanne wol he causes fynde,  
 And swere how that she ys unkynde,  
 Or fals, or privy, or double was.  
 (I, 276-285)

What the narrator seems to be condemning as a general weakness in man is his inability to conform to the courtly code of love. His sentiments toward love lead him to evaluate Aeneas' pietas in terms of the courtly standards of fidelity to one woman. He sees the failure



of Dido and Aeneas' love in terms of the courtly system of love: she was too swiftly attracted to his person and gave herself too easily to him (ll. 240-244). Both, according to W. G. Dodd, in drawing from the arguments of Andreas Capellanus, are serious violations of the code:

Love, to meet the requirements of the courtly system, must not be too easily obtained. This idea receives stress because of the lofty position which woman held in the courtly society. The concrete working of the rule is seen in the coldness and capriciousness of the lady, which are the cause of all the lover's woes as they are pictured in the poetry of the troubadours.<sup>9</sup>

Though the narrator claims that he does not use the "queynte" or artificial rhetoric of love;

What shulde I speke more queynte,  
Or peyne me ny wordes peynte  
To speke of love? Hyt wol not be;  
I kan not of that faculte.  
(I, 245-248)

he does continue to adhere to courtly doctrine by reducing Aeneas' greater obligation to a position of subservience to his affair with Dido:

Allas! what harm doth apparence,  
Whan hit is fals in existence!  
For he to hir a traytour was;  
Wherfore she slow hirself, alas!  
Loo how a woman doth amys  
To love him that unknowen ys.  
(I, 265-270)

The disdain of the courtly woman is being advocated as a proper caution in dealing with men. The narrator accelerates parts of the tale as a courtly forecast of doom. He ignores the time which it takes for their love to be realized, and this allows him proof of the necessity





of feminine disdain, a courtly virtue:

She made Eneas so in grace  
Of Dido, quene of that contree,  
That, shortly for to tellen, she  
Becam hys love, and let hym doo  
Al that weddyng longeth too.  
(I, 240-244)

Though the narrator tries to ignore the destiny of Aeneas, he does make mention of Mercury's warning:

But to excusen Eneas  
Fullyche of al his grete trespas,  
The book seyth Mercurie, sauns fayle,  
Bad hym goo into Italye,  
And leve Auffrikes regioun,  
And Dido and hir faire toun.  
(I, 427-432)

Coming as late as it does, this reminder of the traditional Dido episode leaves the reader with a complex awareness of Chaucer's distance from his narrator.

Dido's sentiments on love are no different from her narrator's: she measures Aeneas' actions by the standards of courtly love. In an incongruously logical and impassioned soliloquy she outlines the sins of courtly love--duplicity, lust, and love pursued for self profit:<sup>10</sup>

Allas! is every man thus trewe,  
That every yere wolde have a newe  
Yf hit so longe tyme dure,  
Or elles three peraventure?  
As thus: of oon he wolde have fame  
In magnifyinge of hys name;  
Another for frendshippe, seyth he;  
And yet ther shal the thridde be  
That shal be take for delyt,  
Loo, or for synguler profit.  
(I, 301-310)

Details of the tale which might force such



courtly judgments into ambiguous light are for the most part ignored. The narrator strips the love affair of its political background, reshaping its characters from the limited perspective of courtly love. The tale loses the tragic cast that C. S. Lewis claims is "a quality of classical literature".<sup>11</sup> The narrator has spent so much time learning the tradition of love in contemporary romance (he is rewarded for having served Venus so loyally, ll. 615-640) that he fails to understand the grandeur of the epic. Therefore, he never relates the nature of the advice of Dido's sister which recommended marriage for the security of Dido's state. He only mentions that Anna gave Dido encouragement in her affair as any young friend might do:

And when she wiste sothly he  
Was forth unto his shippes goon,  
She into hir chambre wente anoon  
And called on hir suster Anne,  
And ganne hir to compleyne thanne;  
And seyde, that she cause was  
That she first loved him, allas!  
(I, 364-370)

Nor is Dido's death complicated by her awareness of her own lack of faith to her dead husband. She dies the death of a courtly woman who fears most of all the loss of her name:

O, welaway that I was born!  
For thorgh yow is my name lorn,  
And alle myn actes red and songe  
Over al thys lond, on every tonge.  
O wikked Fame' for ther nys  
Nothing so swift, lo, as she is!  
(I, 345-350)



To feel remorse about her infidelity to her husband or to reflect upon the effect of her love on the state are outside the bounds of courtly love. The narrator does not mention Dido's bond to her husband because such an ethical consideration would deny the primacy of her love for Aeneas. Political concerns would also detract from the man-woman relationship which, according to C. S. Lewis, was felt to be "the source of all worldly goodness".<sup>12</sup> It seems that the narrator's judgments reflect this standard since he considers the failure of Aeneas' love more important than his founding of Rome. This standard proves an inflexible limit to his artistic vision. His learning has not only removed him from the everyday routine of his neighbors (ll. 649-651), but he seems to twist even his literary experience to conform with his own sentimental notions on love. He twists epic gallantry into a courtly affair.

Two critics, L. K. Shook and B. G. Koonce, have made significant contributions to scholarship on The House of Fame. In quite different ways they have laid to rest the charge of disunity in the poem. Though they do not consider all the subtleties of the Dido episode they do offer guiding light for its consideration.

Shook notes that a theme on love (and the poem is ostensibly a journey for love's "tydynges") was as well a theme on the poetic art: "many medieval poets spoke of





themselves as 'lovers' because they felt that to be a lover was in some way to be a poet."<sup>13</sup> His well supported conclusion seems tenable: "If one wishes to be a poet, one becomes a lover, and an Art of Love is in a real sense an Art of Poetry."<sup>14</sup> His thesis in linking art with love is easily applicable to the Dido episode since the narrator's point of view toward Dido involves both a limited understanding of art and of love.

Shook's suggestion that the narrator's poetic enlightenment involves a turning from experience to the raw sounds of human utterance requires modification if the Dido episode is to be allowed its full meaning. He claims that:

Book I of The Hous of Fame is constructed around the older and widely accepted theory [that a poem is produced out of the emotions, passions and experiences which accompany love]--one which incidentally ought logically to have made Aeneas,--not Chaucer, the poet--and closes with Chaucer's escape from what was personally an empty theory under the new inspiration which came to him symbolically in the guise of the Golden Eagle.<sup>15</sup>

Certainly the narrator--with Chaucer--is involved in an examination of the portrayal of love in art. The escape Shook identifies, however, seems open to a wide variety of interpretations. Shook feels the escape is from what "can be called the Temple of Love tradition, that is, the tradition which holds that poems are made out of the experience of love."<sup>16</sup> The action of the poem, according to Shook involves the search for the origin of poetry:





"Poetry's origin is not in the temple or church of love; it is in the temple or house of fame or sound."<sup>17</sup> It is difficult to understand Shook's distinction between the sounds of love and the experience of love: they do not seem mutually exclusive. Relying upon my own consideration of the Dido episode and the narrator's courtly sentiment toward it, and the fact that Venus was the goddess of courtly love, it seems more likely that the Temple of Love tradition is the tradition of courtly love and that the movement to the House of Fame and Rumor involves a growth in awareness on the part of the poet that experience is the source of art. The entire poem, including the Dido episode, is concerned with the artistic vision and the relationship between received authority and personal experience. These are the opposing forces within the artist, and as the Eagle amusedly scoffs, the persona has relied too heavily on authority:

. . .thou has no tydynges  
 Of Loves folk yf they be glade  
 Ne of noght elles that God made;  
 And noght oonly fro fer contree  
 That ther no tydyng cometh to thee,  
 But of thy verray neyghebores,  
 That duellen almost at thy dores,  
 Thou herist neyther that ne this;  
 For when thy labour doon al ys,  
 And hast mad alle thy rekenynges,  
 In stede of reste and newe thynges,  
 Thou goost hom to thy hous anoon;  
 And, also domb as any stoon,  
 Thou sittest at another book  
 Tyl fully daswed ys thy look,



And lyvest thus as an heremyte,  
 Although thyn abstynence ys lyte.  
 (II, 644-660)

The narrator's reduction of the classical Dido demonstrates the barrenness of the tradition of love. One may argue, I think wrongly, that Dido's reduction is a freshly realistic look at a stale and conventionalized idealization. The fresh look is nothing more than an application of another, more ill-befitting convention. Besides, within the sequence of the narrative, it seems highly unlikely that the narrator is humanizing Dido, testing her idealization in experience. The narrator in the Temple has yet to learn the source of poetry. Nor has he the type of ironic detachment toward ideality that his learning will teach him--that "fals and soth" compound in every "tydinge" (l. 2108). Quite simply his artistic sensitivity is the sentimentality of courtly love. His learning involves not only the recognition of all love experience, both good and bad, as inspiration for the love experience in art, but also the abandonment of conventions which presuppose an order on experience. Certainly the order he imposes on the Dido episode is false; his audience knows it; he is even forced to admit it; but the order is the only possible consequence of a vision that can only sentimentalize love.

Koonce makes more use of the Dido episode than Shook, but I think he makes the episode more direct than



it really is. According to Koonce the nature of the persona's learning is "tydynges of love". He argues that the Dido-Aeneas story is illustrative commentary on the temporal values of human love and fame:

If Dido's fate illustrates the infamy, both earthly and eternal, which rewards the worshipper in the idolatrous temple of Venus, Aeneas forsaking Dido and his eventual achievement of his 'destinee' in Italy exemplify the heavenly fame rewarding those who abandon the temple and return to the path of virtue.<sup>18</sup>

One feels, however, in reading the episode that it is impossible to look upon it as any easy condemnation of Dido. If Dido is an exemplum she is a very complex one. The reader is bound to feel some sympathy for her. His reaction to her involves the complex realization that human love is powerful and important but not so powerful or so important as she makes it seem. It is difficult to agree with Koonce's limpid, moralistic evaluation of Dido:

Enhanced by an empty and ironically incongruous use of logic, Dido's impassioned and somewhat petulant soliloquy reflects the reckless desperation of one whose worship in the Temple of Venus has progressed far beyond the initial sin of carnal love.<sup>19</sup>

Charles Muscatine has also commented on Dido's use of logic,<sup>20</sup> but neither he nor Koonce has considered its function. It seems to me that this use of logic at a moment of intense passion accents the artificiality of the matter of the argument. That is, Dido is demanding of human love qualities derived from the courtly code, but qualities which are not always related to human





experience: the incongruity of the logic to the passion reflects the incongruity of the courtly code to experience:

Allas! is every man thus trewe,  
 That every yere wolde have a newe,  
 Yf hit so longe tyme dure,  
 Or elles three, peraventure?  
 As thus: of oon he wolde have fame  
 In magnifynge of hys name;  
 Another for frendshippe, seyth he;  
 And yet ther shal the thridde be.  
 That shal be take for delyt.  
 Loo, or for synguler profit.  
 (I, 301-310)

To suggest that man's only motivation in life should be the love of one woman is as unrealistic as the impassioned logic of the soliloquy.

If her reaction is hyperbolic, it is still one that we can understand. Her sentiment is at times convincingly human. The discordant quality of the sounds convey Dido's internal turmoil:

Allas! quod she, my swete herte,  
 Have pitee on my sorwes smerte,  
 And slee mee not! go noght away!  
 (I, 315-318)

There is irrational desperation in her begging. Her sentiment seems genuine: it seems more the voice of human suffering in the face of adversity than the voice of vice "far beyond the initial sin of carnal love". But the response of the audience is not simple sympathy either. Aeneas' desertion and founding of Rome, though only grudgingly referred to by the poet, re-establishes the epic context of the episode. In this context as well as within the frame of medieval Christian orthodoxy,



Dido's grief seems excessive yet pitiable; her love seems half admirable and half blasphemous. The reader experiences the realization of the narrator in the House of Fame that "fals and soth" are blurred in experience; that Dido cannot be easily praised nor easily condemned.

In Dido there is the tension between illustration and representation which exists in the most complex of Chaucer's characters. She is a humanized abstraction of imperfect love. But like Blanche, her character is of particular relevance to the character of her narrator. Blanche's idealization is generated from the heart of a bereaved lover; Dido's characterization is generated from the heart of a courtly poet. Blanche as a blend of Christian and courtly virtue serves to praise her Knight's character; Dido as a courtly bereaved lover is implicit criticism of the limitations of her poet's vision.

Though Dido is a projection of the narrator not unlike Blanche, she differs in one important technical respect: she appears directly in the narrative. Or at least she seems to appear. She does remain a picture on the wall, but she is brought to life by the poet's imagination and seems to be a separate voice. She is not, however, an independent agent in the narrative; she is another voice of the narrator. Her attitudes are a reflection of his own. Though Dido takes on a more complex presence than Blanche, she does function similarly



in the narrative. She is used to reflect and examine attitudes on love, and particularly to voice the sentiments of the naive courtly persona.

During the moments when she speaks without the narrator's interpolation it is easy to forget her dependency on the narrator. And at these moments she anticipates later women characters, like Criseyde who assumes a reality independent of her narrator, becoming so independent, in fact, that the narrator can only wish her to conform with his order. He is unable to hammer Criseyde into the courtly code when experience cannot support it. Though Dido's presence may seem convincingly human and at times independent of the dreamer's attitudes on love, the reader cannot forget that she is distanced in a picture on a temple wall of a dream world.





### III

#### ANELIDA AND ARCITE

Criticism dealing with Anelida and Arcite has speculated about its sources, described its metrics, and cast it aside as evidence of immature craftsmanship.<sup>1</sup> F. N. Robinson in an introduction to his edition of the text has come to a harsh evaluation of its characterization, terming it "poor and conventional".<sup>2</sup> Wolfgang Clemen hears "genuine human suffering"<sup>3</sup> in the voice of Anelida in her complaint, but he does not consider its contrast with or the critical questions it raises for her characterization in the narrative. The Anelida of the complaint is complex, personal, and human; the Anelida of the narrative is of epic stature, heroic and impersonal, reducible to an idea--the universal value of Love and Fidelity. It is in this duality that we can note Chaucer's technique of mingling representational and illustrative qualities of characterization. That he does not meet with the same success in Anelida that he does with later characters such as Troilus and Criseyde may be more attributable to the fragmentary nature of the poem than to any lack of craft.

It is interesting to note that Anelida appears to





be a product of Chaucer's own invention. Though Chaucer claims Statius, author of the Thebaid, and a mysterious Corynne as sources for his tale (l. 21),<sup>4</sup> literary historians suspect these claims are ploys to gain authority. Clemen, for example, has noted a general, medieval attitude toward fiction:

Fictitious sources are of course cited by many medieval authors: it was considered to enhance the credibility and importance of one's own work if one referred to some source or authority: whether this was actually in evidence or not.<sup>5</sup>

The characterization like the entire poem derived its authority from history. A character out of antiquity was endowed with a genuine dignity and a creative flexibility: it had a real-life source, but it was not too real, too near, or too common to be rendered powerless in its capacity of illustration, an ideal validated by time in a present-past perspective. Chaucer's audience was already predisposed to emulate the ancients and to accept the truths of history. Chaucer realized the possibility of invention to win belief, provided it was set in an historical frame. Under the guise of an historical recorder of an ancient tale, he gives his tale authority while allowing his hand to create.

So far we have considered the Duchess and Dido. Both are exemplifications of attitudes, the former of her bereaved lover, the latter of her sentimental narrator. They are not organic and self-sufficient characters



functioning in an immediate and exclusive experience; instead they help define the nature of the personage who describes or envisions them. The Duchess is removed from our world by death and by dream; Dido is not only a dream-world character but moreover a static picture on a wall. Anelida is more a character than an exemplification of her narrator's attitude. Since the personality of the narrator is left undeveloped, it is impossible to see her characterization as anything but objective. Perhaps because Anelida is a character, Chaucer does not know how to control her. When he gives her a genuine human voice in her complaint, he undermines her illustrative function in the narrative. In the complaint she is not distanced but addresses us directly as we over-hear what she is writing to Arcite. She acquires a personality and, though this verisimilitude need not be considered an end in itself, one cannot be sure of the "fruyt" which lies covered beneath it. Because the poem is only a fragment final judgments on meaning are impossible. One can only speculate about possible artistic reconciliations that could have unified the representational Anelida with the illustrative Anelida, directing us toward Chaucer's final statement.

The poem begins with an epic invocation to Mars. Though the tale is titled Anelida and Arcite, The Compleynt of feire Anelida and fals Arcite, no mention is made of



either of the major characters for seventy lines. We are introduced instead to Theseus who has just defeated Cithie and is returning home with his new and beautiful wife, Ipolita, "the hardy quene/ Of Cithia" (ll. 36-37). Creon moves into the political vacuum in Thebes, which has apparently fallen to Theseus, and holds it in tyranny. Attempting to secure his political station, Creon draws the nobility of the area into the city and tries to win their support. Among the migrant nobility is Anelida, beautiful queen of Ermony. In this city of political decay and corruption, a world which necessitates dissimulation, Anelida falls in love with Arcite. She proves faithful to him in all ways; he proves faithless to her in all ways. For no reason Arcite abandons Anelida for another woman and accuses Anelida of duplicity. Anelida makes her complaint and a brief return to the narrative directs her toward a sacrifice in the temple of Mars when the poem cuts off.

The conditions for the love of Anelida and Arcite are ominous from the moment the poem opens. The invocation is cold. Not only is it made to Mars and Bellona, deities of war, but to a temple in Thrace, "the frosty contre" (l. 2). The epic quality of the introduction casts an austere shadow over the love tale, and seems hardly capable of allowing the sentiment we might expect in a love story. The background to the tale underscores a pervasive







corruption theme which works its way through all levels of society. Against a background of war and destruction, political usurpation and dissimulation, what can be expected from a personal love relationship? If the body politic is sick, is it any wonder that its sickness is obvious in its member, Arcite?

This corruption theme is traceable in the descriptions of Arcite. Repeated metaphors associate him with animals (l. 157; l. 184) and suggest the nature of his personal corruption and perversion: he has been de-humanized. But it is not as if he is alone, for his irrationality and animality is reflected in the warring, dissimulating world that forms the background to the poem.

As the poem begins, we are outside it, capable of reading it with the same sort of detachment we might read history. The narrator assumes the pose of historian and reports dead, historical fact. Even the personal and particular tale of Anelida and Arcite is recounted with historical impersonality and precision. That is not to say, however, that we are unaware of the narrator's presence. He warns us to learn the obvious lesson of the tale: to beware of male perfidy (l. 197); but we sense his presence in the way we do a minister at sermon time: we know we are supposed to heed his words--however grudgingly--but we seldom relish his presentation or



personality. The characters he draws for us are obvious. Anelida is "feire"; Arcite is "fals". Characterization, then, can be of little interest in the narrative. But the definition of character extends into our expectations of the events as well: we know what must happen. The episodes of the plot serve only to emphasize the limitations imposed on character as early as the title. But our expectation is a source of dramatic irony which leads to pathos. Though we know what will inevitably happen, Anelida does not. We can pity her because she is in no way deserving of her fate.

The narrator does not intend for our attention to be directed toward the particular and the personal qualities of the tale. He generalizes from the particulars of the tale, returning the focus to his own immediate world. For example, from a description of Arcite's mastery in the craft of deceit, he moves to a general condemnation: "as nedeth not to men such craft to lere" (l. 98). Arcite's particular and obvious contrast with Anelida allows the narrator a moralization: "But nothing thinketh the fals as doth the trewe" (l. 105). From such a particular contrast the narrator has deduced, as he does many times throughout the poem, a general principle of human nature. To learn about Mankind, he has turned his attention to man.

The narrator's rhetorical questions not only are



designed to enliven the poem for oral delivery, but also to press the immediacy of Anelida's dilemma into our own world: "Alas! what herte myghte endure hit,/ For routhe or wo, her sorwe for to telle?" (ll. 162-163). In describing his own task and the involvement he feels, the narrator defines our reaction: we are to feel what he feels, to allow the meaning of the tale to move outside history, time, and culture and to find its place within the context of our own immediate experience. Still as in reading history, we are not drawn into the tale; rather we draw from it. The narrator formulates the principles the tale exemplifies and we are passively directed to accept them.

Our point of view shifts in the complaint when we over-hear Anelida's very intimate letter to Arcite. Anelida opens herself to us directly in a dramatic monologue which nearly becomes a dialogue at times with Arcite. Gone is the lifeless catalogue of events and the reductive character of the narrative. Instead we meet a personality who is trying to create herself away from, conciliate herself with, condemn, and understand her betrayer. The lyrical complaint exposes a complex, unique personality.

I doubt if anyone could consider the description of Anelida in the narrative as interesting as her direct introduction in the complaint. The narrative description





treats Anelida with superlatives. She lives the courtly forms; Arcite only uses them to his own advantage. By way of unimaginative contrast with the evil Arcite, the perfection of Anelida's character is drawn.

The Anelida of the narrative is an illustration. Though her character is flat, her meaning is extensive, at least in a topical way. From her character a general principle of human nature and values is generated. She is the incarnation of the greatest virtue of human love--fidelity. She illustrates fidelity not in a way that may be representationally credible but in a way that can portray the nature of absolute love: "And for to speken of her stidfastnesse/ She passeth both Penelope and Lucesse" (11. 81-82). In the narrative all the details of her character contribute toward developing the quality of her perfection. For example, she is of "such fairenesse,/ That Nature had a joye her to behelde" (11. 79-80). We are left with an impression of her character which is very similar to that which we derive from Blanche or even from the formel eagle of the Parlement of Foules. We may be unimpressed with Chaucer's technique which characterizes his heroines so similarly. But we must remember that ideality is constant and all the heroines in partaking of the ideal are by definition similar. Chaucer may have been more interested in what united than what distinguished man. But he does allow the





nature of ideality to be tested in differing circumstances: in the case of Blanche the love relationship is ended by death; in the case of the formel eagle restraint in accepting a lover is exercised; and finally in the case of Anelida the love is corrupted by betrayal.

Anelida's actions in the narrative are also reducible in support of her virtue. We know Anelida is "feire" and her actions are honorable even to the point of degree. That is, she chooses most honorably to allow Arcite to read letters from other suitors because her love for Arcite is total (ll. 113-119); but in doing so, she violates the trust of her suitors. Her very happiness is dependent on Arcite; consequently her actions in his absence illustrate her devotion:

When she shal ete, on him is so her thoght,  
That wel unnethe of mete tok she kep;  
And when that she was to her reste broght,  
On him she thoghte alwey tel that she slep;  
When he was absent, prevely she wep.  
(ll. 134-138)

Yet her steadfastness is no deterrent to the whims of Arcite's passion. He goes off to another woman who treats him like a horse and consequently exercises some control over him:

His newe lady holdeth him so narowe  
Up by the bridil, at the staves ende,  
That every word he dredeth as an arowe;  
Her daunger made him bothe bowe and bende,  
And as her liste, made him turne or wende;  
For she ne graunted him in her lyvyng  
No grace, whi that he hath lust to singe...  
(ll. 183-189)



We have already made note of the animal imagery used to describe Arcite, but we have not considered the quality of the meaning it carried for a medieval audience. The entire medieval system of the seven deadly sins was personified with animals. And the medieval Christian was certainly as sensitive as we are to the separation of man from beast. Arcite is being more scornfully than humorously condemned by the images.

Anelida's actions in the narrative are formulas of emotion. Like the medieval audience we should now be familiar with the meaning of swooning, fainting, fasting etc. Chaucer is required to intensify his use of the forms in order to distinguish between Anelida-absent-from-her-love and Anelida-betrayed. To effect this intensification Chaucer makes her actions extreme. While she had difficulty eating, sleeping, and controlling her tears in Arcite's absence, in his loss she:

. . .wepith, wailleth, swouneth piteously;  
 To groundede she falleth as a ston;  
 Craumpyssheth her lymes crokedly;  
 She speketh as her wit were al agon;  
 Other colour then asshen hath she noon;  
 Non other word speketh she, moche or lyte,  
 But "merci, cruel herte myn, Arcite!"  
 (11. 169-175)

Such a description would not have given the medieval audience the amusement we may derive from it. But we must remember that we have our own emotional formulas: slamming doors, refusing to speak, etc., and that they are expressive of the inner feeling we



want known. In the same way Anelida's contortions mean something, but we moderns may be unable to understand them. Though actions have meaning their meanings may certainly not be universal.

The Anelida of the complaint is representational: she becomes convincingly human. With a human personality and depth, she fails to excite the kind of adulation we may have felt for her in the narrative. Rather, we feel she is one of us struggling with a most basic problem of human existence--how to cope with a love betrayed, and reaching no easier a solution than one can expect from the complexities of human love. She is controlled by a variety of impulses, not all of which are virtuous. As she becomes more and more complex, we can no longer reduce her character to one, simple virtue--or abstraction of womanly noblesse. The easy judgments on Anelida's character that the narrator directed us to make in the narrative are no longer possible. In becoming real, Anelida is no longer ideal.

Chaucer apparently intended Anelida as an exemplum. His difficulty in sustaining her as one may be due to his experimentation in genres and his skill in making the complaint convincing. Unlike many writers of complaints, Chaucer attempts to set the motivation for his complaints in a story.<sup>6</sup> Though the complaint seems an intrinsically personal and emotional form of poetry, Nancy Dean has





noted how highly conventionalized it was in the hands of Chaucer's contemporaries: "Lack of precision, lack of individuality seems to have been sought by the poets of the complaint."<sup>7</sup> Chaucer in making the complaint expressive of genuine human emotion, humanizes Anelida to a point where she can no longer exemplify virtue. The narrative characterization of Anelida has little human form. She is merely an idea--fidelity--operating in a clearly predictable way. Consequently the highly human form of the complaint, while emotionally convincing, is not dramatically probable for the exemplary Anelida of the narrative. The conflicting duality is unified in later writing where Chaucer yields to the demands of reality without deflating his illustration.

Seeing her actions "ne gat no geyn" (l. 206) Anelida decides to write a complaint to Arcite. Though her sorrow is obviously genuine, she realizes that she can direct it toward more than one expression. She replaces the crippling self-indulgence of her highly personal actions--swooning, wailing, etc.--with an assertive communication with Arcite in the complaint. Both express sorrow, but the latter is creative; the former is destructive. That is not to say, however, that the complaint works any sort of catharsis in Anelida.

Anelida experiences pain while she creates. Chaucer gives to Anelida's voice of grief elaborate



metaphors which associate Amelida's mental agony with physical pain. Thus remembrance is "the poynt" of "the swerd of sorwe" (ll. 211-212). A mental condition is related to its physical manifestations: her heart is "bare of blis and blak of hewe" (l. 213), and her "surete awhaped countenaunce" (l. 215).

Following the physical description, Anelida voices the intended meaning of her plight and generalizes from her own condition:

For whoso trewest is, hit shal hir rewe,  
That serveth love and doth her observaunce  
Alwey til oon, and chaungeth for no newe.  
(ll. 217-219)

Though it is fitting summary of the poem's didactic intent, we, in our developing perspective toward Anelida, will be forced later to question and qualify all that she says. The singularity of her devotion--even its wording--is dangerously similar to that demanded of Christians for God. The words themselves show Anelida capable of deducing human principle from her own experience. She has been able to get out of herself, to see the general picture, to rationally interpret her position in the world.

Such poetic devices as figurative speech or moral generalization may seem inconsistent with the nature of the complaint. As previously noted, the complaint was a conventional literary form with formulated rhetorical practices. With Chaucer, however, the rhetorical figures



take on added significance. They are set beside simple colloquial expression, and the contrast projects the nature of Anelida's inner conflict. As artificial speech is jolted by colloquial statement, the audience becomes aware of the many sides of Anelida's personality, including both sentimentality and anger. Anelida rationally identifies the source of her unhappiness and then irrationally renews her devotion to it.

The identification comes quickly. She has loved "oon with al myn herte and myghte" (1. 221), words strikingly parallel to even modern prayers of faith that we have learned in catechism classes. The calm of this declarative statement is broken by her recollection of Arcite's perfidy. The tone turns violent, emotional and accusative: "Now is he fals, alas!" (1. 229). She is aware of Arcite's duplicity--even the fact that he laughs at her misery--and yet she loves him "alwey nevertheless" (1. 236). Surely we are no longer capable of judging her love in the comfortable way we did in the narrative: her motives have become too ambiguous. Her love proves irrational in the way human love often does, but in becoming human, it loses the superficial purity which glossed the narrative.

The irrationality of Anelida's love characterizes the entire complaint. Her "foo" (1. 239) is her "swete" (1. 256) and later her "swete foo" (1. 272). She alter-





nates between love and hate. At once she submits to a solitary destiny but then rejects the thought and hopes for reconciliation instead. She fully realizes that Arcite has feigned love and that the price she has paid for it has been "to dere" (l. 255), but her reaction is as though Arcite were perfectly deserving of continued love. Frantically she enumerates her many acts of kindness and addressing him directly, painfully concludes: "ye rekke not a myte" (l. 269).

In a more subtle approach to Arcite she turns from her own injury to the injury Arcite's betrayal has done to his name. His reputation is in "sclaunder now and blame" (l. 275). Her focus quickly returns to herself. In what can be seen as nearly blasphemous statement, she calls on God as witness to the totality of her love--to the fact that she loved Arcite "moste" (l. 277).

Though the shifts in love and hate continue similarly throughout the complaint, they deserve individual treatment in this study. Repetition becomes unavoidable and will serve to strengthen my concluding argument.

Anelida identifies Arcite's deceit one moment and then offers her love:

Yet come ayein, and yet be pleyn som day  
 And that shal this, that now is mys, be game,  
 And al foryive while that I lyve may.  
 (ll. 278-280)

Her willingness to consider Arcite's infidelity a game





casts an air of suspicion over her motives. Somehow her offer to "al foryive" (l. 280) is shaded in religious presumption. For in the all inclusive offer she assumes the capacity for forgiving the sin as well as the sinner. She appeals to Arcite to return and expresses a willingness to forgive even before he has asked for forgiveness.

Anelida recognizes her human limits and thereby refuses a life of prayer, a conjectured alternative to her suffering. She blames herself for her present situation and wishes "ful longe agoon" to "have taken hede" (l. 307), but the irony is that even now, with all the evidence of betrayal in full view, she is unable to break from Arcite. Anelida suggests the innate nature of deceit in Arcite; it is not only necessary by law of nature but incorrigible as well: "myghte as wel holde Aperill fro reyn,/ As holde yow, to make yow be stedfaste" (ll. 309-310). At the same time she considers Arcite a "roten mast" (l. 314) and a "beste" (l. 315), recalling the corruption and perversion which have marked earlier descriptions of his character.

"Now merci, swete, yf I mysseye!" (l. 317)-- Anelida makes one final attempt at conciliation. She tries to dismiss the truth of her many accusations. She dreams of Arcite's return even to the detail of his outfit-- "clad in asure" (l. 330). "But welaway" (l. 338), she knows her hope cannot be realized, that Arcite cannot be



reclaimed and that he "holdeth [her] destinee a wreche" (1. 339). Arcite will not draw her away from her grief and she appears incapable of drawing herself away from it: her wit "so weyk is hit" (1. 341). Anelida compares herself to the swan which in legend sang its penance before death. And on this note of despair, where finally there are no satisfactory answers to her dilemma, the narrator returns and prepares us for the description of Anelida's sacrifice to Mars.

As a heroine the Anelida of the complaint lacks stature. Perhaps Chaucer intended her to come to some recognition of divine love as does Troilus. Indeed Anelida and Troilus are posited in similar dramatic situations--they both must face betrayals. Their initial reactions to their plights are conventional and similar. Natural and social processes of life are abandoned in grief. Both Anelida and Troilus negate any joy to be found in social intercourse or any nourishment to be derived from food and sleep. But while Anelida remains despairingly committed to earthly love, Troilus in his palinode recognizes the proper proportion of his earthly love. Like Troilus', Anelida's mistake is not that she chose to love, but that she placed her hope for perfect love in what by its very nature can only be insufficient, imperfect and temporary. Human love is both beauty and doom: Anelida is both heroine and dupe.



From a modern perspective it is difficult to understand the effect of Anelida's sentimentality on a medieval audience. Certainly they may have had a greater tolerance for self-pity than we have--the complaint was a popular and legitimate literary expression of it. It is difficult--good Christians that they were--to doubt that they would not have viewed Anelida's character with at least some skepticism and maybe even a little consternation.

Anelida is mistaken to the end. Her singular devotion to Arcite is of a magnitude finally only worthy of God. Her attitude toward Arcite seems almost obsessive. She is aware of his corrupt nature--all we know of him is evil--and she loves him. To want Arcite back, as Anelida does, may simply underscore the irrationality of love, but it is more than irrationality: it is stupidity and possibly immorality. Anelida may well illustrate fidelity, but perverse fidelity to someone who is evil and deserving of no faith. She lacks a correct measure of pride and distance. She offers forgiveness before Arcite requests it, and almost flippantly resolves to forget everything, to consider what has happened a game (11. 279-280). Is this mercy or is her offer motivated by need? While we may identify with Anelida's intensely human reactions, we cannot really admire them.

So much has been written and hypothesized about





the history of the "psychological character" that I hesitate in applying the term to Anelida. She is placed in the kind of situation that we all enjoy reading about but hate to be caught in: one where there is really no satisfactory solution, where any alternative is self-defeating. The mark of her response in the complaint is clearly psychological: she reacts mentally. Her mentality reflects the totality of the human mind: reason is at odds with emotion; memory undermines sentiment; fact contradicts feeling. Her vocal expression, the projection of this inner turmoil, is at times highly artificial and at other times violently colloquial. We need only recall the contrived metaphor comparing Arcite's fidelity to April rain and contrast it with a common interjection like: "Now merci swete, yf I mysseye!" (l. 317). The rhetorical shifts represent Anelida's shifts in mood.

Beside any impression of psychological realism is the knowledge that the complaint is a convention. Chaucer does manage to make the complaint genuinely human. As has been suggested above the elaborately rhetorical parts of the complaint serve to illustrate Anelida's fluctuations between reason and emotion. But, since Anelida's narrative characterization is opposed to her lyric characterization, it is not possible to consider her a unified, organic and psychological character. From its inception, Anelida's character is forced into stasis:



the title of the poem concerns the "feire Anelida" and the "fals Arcite". The stasis is jolted when Chaucer attempts to let Anelida's character develop organically through her speech and actions. But there is no resolution.

We can only speculate as to how Chaucer may have intended to secure Anelida's function as illustration. We can consider how Chaucer has reconciled the representational qualities with the illustrative functions of character in later works. I have already mentioned the reconciliation that comes in Troilus. It seems fair to suggest that Anelida like Troilus may have been intended to undertake some moral growth in any narrative which was to follow the complaint. She does experience some growth, some change, in the portion of the poem that is available to us: she moves from self-contained grief to the creative objectifying of it in the complaint. But there is never any transcendence of her own immediate dilemma: her perspective remains hopelessly human-oriented. A transcendence would have given her stature as an illustration of womanly noblesse, allowing us to have delighted in the representational success of the complaint, but removing her again in time to re-establish her as the distanced ideal Chaucer's title and narration seem to have designed for her. That she was so human in the complaint could have served to win our belief for her idealization in the narrative.



#### IV

##### TROILUS AND CRISEYDE

In the opening lines of Troilus and Criseyde the narrator summarizes his poetic purpose:

The double sorwe of Troilus to tellen,  
That was the kyng Priamus sone of Troye,  
In lovyng, how his aventures fellen  
Fro wo to wele, and after out of joie,  
My purpos is, er that I parte fro ye.  
(I, 1-5)

Criseyde is not mentioned, nor is she focused upon at the conclusion of the poem. It begins and ends with Troilus. Though Chaucer seems to have designated Troilus' moral education as the core of the narrative, critics have been less willing to designate it the topic of their commentaries. Indeed some have gone so far as to see the epilogue with Troilus' assumption into heaven as an artistic weakness.<sup>1</sup> The more common mistake, however, is to concentrate on the enigmatic Criseyde, inflating her importance beyond her narrative dependency on Troilus. Though Criseyde has received a disproportionate amount of critical attention, the results have been anything but encouraging. Often, it seems, the wrong questions have been asked with regard to her character.

Most of the post-Victorian critics have attempted to see Criseyde as a psychological character. If psycho-





logical can be taken to mean complex, then most readers, including this one, would agree with their assessment. But the explanations of her complexity have been far too reductive, and far too psychological. Once the critic has correctly acknowledged Criseyde's complexity, he begins the reductive process of attempting to explain her complexity in terms of one ruling passion, responding almost literally to Alexander Pope's call:

Search then the RULING PASSION: There, alone,  
The Wild are constant and the Cunning known;  
The Fool consistent, and the False sincere;  
Priests, Princes, Women, no dissemblers here.  
(Moral Essay I., 174-177)

Though the purpose of this study is primarily an analysis of artistic technique in characterization, it is, however, useful to assess the psychological interpretations of Criseyde, if only to discover they lead to dead-ends.

It is somewhat surprising, given the contradictory responses to her character, that Criseyde is continually praised for her credibility, consistency, and probability. It would seem that if Chaucer did, indeed, place all the motivations for Criseyde's actions in the narrative, there would be more unanimity in assessing her nature. If he did not, then it seems reasonable to assume that Chaucer did not consider psychological realism the principle effect of her character. The variety of critical directions taken by the following, able readers leads me to believe the latter is the case, and that





Criseyde's complexity can be more appreciated as an artistic one than as a psychological one.

Source critics, Bernhard Ten Brink and Albert S. Cook, have attempted to relate Criseyde's character to its counterpart in Boccaccio's Il Filostrato, the primary source of Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde. Both reach the same conclusion: Chaucer has psychologized her character; but they do not agree on the nature of her psychology. Ten Brink sees Criseyde as an innocent girl trapped by conditions which are outside her control and then compares her to Boccaccio's Criseida: "The English Criseyde is more innocent, less experienced, less sensual, more modest than her Italian prototype".<sup>2</sup> Cook reacts to Criseyde less with his heart than with his mind and after describing Criseida as heartless and shamelessly self-indulgent, concludes that "Criseyde virtually represents Boccaccio's mistress".<sup>3</sup>

Textual critics J.S. Graydon, R.K. Root, C.S. Lewis, and C. Saintonge all agree that Criseyde is a psychological character but they do not agree on the motivations for her actions. Graydon's title-- "Defense of Criseyde"-- suggests his bias. He argues quite convincingly that Troilus-- not Criseyde-- was the one who initially and most frequently violates their love. He contends that "the author's summation of the purport of his work is warning to women, lest they suffer



the undeserved unhappiness that came to Criseyde through her love for Troilus".<sup>4</sup> He describes the nature of Troilus' treachery in what, I feel, is an example of unfair exaggeration to prove a point:

The uncontrolled jealousy of Troilus as only an expectant lover, may be forgiven him on physiological and psychological grounds, but what extenuation can be pleaded for persistence in his suspicion, after the raptures of the first night? When the time has come for parting, instead of a conventional expression of gratitude expected of a medieval--or any--lover, under similar circumstances, Troilus, in quite carefully selected language seeks new assurances of her devotion.<sup>5</sup>

Graydon's affection for Criseyde has blinded him to the quality of Troilus' suspicion. Troilus is merely conscious of the temporality of all worldly things and thereby fears losing the one he loves most. He wants to be assured, if only in words, of the strength of her commitment:

But natheles, myn owen lady bright,  
Yit were it so that I wiste outrely  
That I, youre humble servant and youre knyght,  
Were in youre herte iset as fermely  
As ye in myn, the which thyng, trewely,  
Me levere were than thise worldes tweyne,  
Yet sholde I bet enduren al my peyne.

(III, 1485-1491)

Is he not only asking Criseyde to tell him she loves him? Not only does Graydon over-emphasize Troilus' suspicion, but his reading encourages an ironic view of the palinode, thereby removing the love story from its frame of Christian love. Still, what is interesting about Graydon's argument is his sentiment for Criseyde which leads him to assume that by indicting Troilus, Criseyde's



betrayal will be somehow more justifiable. The heart has reasons the mind does not understand!

Root's sentiment for Criseyde is quite different from Graydon's.<sup>6</sup> Once again he unfairly exaggerates certain of her responses and attaches to them a pejorative meaning: he argues that she is calculating--rather than reasonable; emotionally shallow--rather than unromantic. But he weighs most heavily the last part of Criseyde's portrait in Book V. where she is described, in what Root feels is summary of her character as: "Tendre-herted, slyding of corage" (l. 825). Arthur Mizener challenges his emphasis:

[It is] difficult enough to believe that Chaucer would put the whole burden of clarifying Criseyde's motive for betraying Troilus on a half line near the end of the poem, and even more difficult to believe that he could have meant it to outweigh the import of the preceding five and one half lines, even if it assumed that this passage is intended as explanation of Criseyde's motives rather than a simple listing of the general qualities of the narrator.<sup>7</sup>

Root's emphasis on the half line has been bolstered by the reading of C. S. Lewis which identifies Criseyde's ruling passion throughout the narrative as fear. His over-simplification of Criseyde's character is worth debating:

Fortunately Chaucer has so emphasized the ruling passion of his heroine, that we cannot mistake it. It is Fear--fear of loneliness, of old age, of death, of love, and of hostility; of everything indeed, that can be feared.<sup>8</sup>

At certain crucial moments in the early books Criseyde seems more self-assured than fearful. In one of the





earliest descriptions of Criseyde the narrator not only considers her "drede" but also her "ful assured lokyng and manere":

Byhynden other folk, in litel brede,  
And neigh the dore, ay under shames drede,  
Simple of atire and debonaire of chere,  
With ful assured lokyng and manere.  
(I, 179-182)

The way she weighs the pros and cons of accepting Troilus' love suggests a person who acts according to reason. To illustrate her capacity for control of her situation, I quote somewhat lengthily:

She thoughte wel that Troilus persone  
She knew by syghte and ek his gentillesse,  
And thus she seyde, "Al were it nat to doone  
To graunte hym love, yet for his worthynesse  
It were honour, with pley and with gladnesse,  
In honestee with swich a lord to deele  
For myn estat, and also for his heele.  
  
"Ek wel woot I my kynges sone is he;  
And sith he hath to se me swich delit,  
If I wolde outreliche his sighte flee,  
Peraunter he myghte have me in dispit,  
Thorugh whicch I myghte stonde in worse plit.  
Now were I wis, me hate to purchase  
Withouten nede, ther I may stonde in grace?  
(II, 701-714)

She thinks first of Troilus' person and then draws in other considerations to rationalize her love. The calm, logical analysis suggests a mind trying to convince itself --not a mind dominated by fear. Her lines seem at least as much motivated by hope as by fear. Furthermore, her actions at Deiphebus' and in the bedroom are confidently assertive. Her first direct encounter with Troilus would suggest that Troilus is the one dominated by fear:



And dressed hym upward, and she right tho  
 Gan bothe hire hondes softe upon hym leye.  
 "O, for the love of God, do ye nought so  
 To me," quod she, "I! what is this to seye?  
 Sire, comen am I to yow for causes tweye:  
 First, yow to thonke, and of youre lorshipe eke  
 Continuance I wolde yow biseke.

(III, 71-77)

How can anyone read cringing fear into these lines describing a very important moment in her life? Finally it is Criseyde who is able to face the reality of the pending separation and to suggest a suitable course of action. Her refusal to run away with Troilus is not cowardice but common sense. She realizes the extent of Troilus' obligation to Troy, so she suggests quite calmly a plan that she really feels will work. The audience can reflect ironically on the details of her plan, perhaps even seeing in their profusion some self-doubt, but it is difficult to see Criseyde's own conscious trust in her words as anything but sincere. She even has alternatives, and her plan is deftly based on the avaricious character of her father. W. G. Dodd has concluded that Criseyde is "self possessed and cool headed under fire."<sup>9</sup>

Constance Saintonge observes conflicting effects of beauty and ugliness from the same psychological source in Criseyde:

It is, it appears, our moral duty to shut our eyes to her allurements, since in the end she is so weak. 'Criseyde is charming but she is unfaithful'--the but rushes in too soon. Surely Chaucer intended his readers to take more pleasure in her charm. Pleasure and perhaps something more: another perception of Chaucer's feeling about the



difficulties of human life; for if one forswears or at least postpones condemnation, one is struck by the notion the same qualities which made her desirable brought about her fall from grace.<sup>10</sup>

There is certainly some truth in Saintonge's statement: feminine weakness under more favorable circumstances can be femininely beautiful. Her argument in suggesting the kinship of beauty and ugliness accounts to some extent for the complexity of our response to Criseyde: once the mind seems to have safely condemned her as unfaithful, the heart begins arguing her beauty. To quote W. B. Yeats' articulate analysis of the human condition in "Crazy Jane Talks to the Bishop": "Fair and Foul are near of kin,/ And fair needs foul".

I think that it can be safely stated that psychological studies of Criseyde tend to inflate her importance beyond her function in the narrative as a whole. Some recent studies have focused on issues that were certainly of importance to Chaucer, attempting to look upon Criseyde with a medieval perspective. Arthur Mizener, for example, notes:

Chaucer's method of characterization is, in this view, essentially static: a character is presented, that is, shown as made up of certain characteristics such as pity or generosity: and then, by the events of the story, it is placed in various circumstances in which it always acts in accord with these characteristics. Chaucer's characters do not change or develop under the impact of experience; they display various aspects of an established set of characteristics as the progress of the narrative places them in varying circumstances. Conversely, the events of the narrative are not determined by the particular moral qualities ascribed to the characters.<sup>11</sup>





Mizener shifts the perspective on character, but it would seem that in light of Criseyde's representational as well as illustrational complexity, that he goes too far. Chaucer's characters are more than static icons. It goes without saying that Criseyde is far more than a symbol. She has been interpreted as human by varying sensibilities, and Chaucer humanizes her to such an extent that we even feel we can detect her laugh, though not equate her to any simple abstraction.

The studies of Blanche, Dido, and Anelida, have attempted to balance a recognition that Chaucer uses character for an illustrative function against a consideration of character in its own right as representation. He has used the woman character to examine love, but in the process he has displayed a growing complexity of characterization. Though "his characters are generally to be read as personified illustrations of broad, abstract meanings rather than as self-limiting centers of interest,"<sup>12</sup> I think it is still possible to consider the artistic complexity of characterization in Criseyde which makes her underlying doctrinal meaning palatable, and which at the same time derives from techniques used in the development of the previous women characters.

I hope to show in Criseyde the culmination of an artistic awareness that has its roots in the character-



izations of Blanche, Anelida, and Dido. The same demands on poetic vision and craft that determined their characterizations exist in Criseyde: a) the nature of ideality and beauty and their consideration in art, b) the yoking of highly personalized lyric soliloquies with biased narrative comment so that the reader has a comprehensive view, not singularly dependent upon the speech of the character nor on the reaction of the narrator, c) the tension between doctrinal illustration and human representation so that the fruit is not obscured by the chaf (as seems to have happened in much psychological criticism) but is made more palatable.

In Book I. Criseyde's character is developed totally through narrative descriptions. The narrator, Troilus and contemporary opinion agree upon her ideality and she is so safely distanced from the audience's direct view that there is no possibility of disputing her angelic presence. Distance seems to have been an artistic requisite for idealization with Chaucer. His vision of experiential reality, including human weakness, was so clear, that he must have found it difficult to adulate anyone--except from a distance. The Parson and the Knight are, perhaps, exceptions, but even their ideality is allowed to surface obliquely through their own actions. Chaucer does not single them out for idealization in his descriptions; they idealize themselves in illustration.



The case is slightly different with Blanche and with the Criseyde of Book I. At the outset of Troilus and Criseyde, Criseyde, safely removed by distance, and without a humanized personality, is conceived in the kind of idealized non-presence that creates our impression of Blanche. Giving a character a personality meant denying him ideality since for Chaucer ideality was an idea and not an experientially observable fact of life. But in the romantic mood of the first book, the narrator is able to forego even the ugly facts of the tale and to keep Criseyde safely veiled in ideality. As in the descriptions of Blanche, moral qualities are expressed by the physical beauty of Criseyde, only here there is an awareness on the part of the narrator, lodged in the word "semed", that his assumption may be false:

Criseyde was this lady name al right,  
 As to my doom, in al Troies cite  
 Nas non so fair, for passynge every wight  
 So aungelik was hir natif beaute,  
 That lik a think immortal semed she,  
 As doth an hevenyssh perfit creature,  
 That down were sent in scornynge of nature.  
 (I, 99-105)

The narrator's reaction is reinforced by Troilus who also attributes moral dignity to Criseyde's physical beauty, not without the narrator's own skepticism:

She nas nat with the leste of hire stature,  
 But alle hire lymes so wel answeyng  
 Weren to wommanhode, that creature  
 Was nevere lasse mannyssh in semyng.  
 And ek the pure wise of hire mevyng  
 Shewed wel that men myght in hire gesse





Honour, estat, and wommanly noblesse.  
(I, 281-287)

The narrator also invokes contemporary opinion to reinforce the male reactions of Troilus and himself by noting "hir goodly lokyng gladed al the prees" (I, 173).

The events of the tale contradict the romantic and sentimental quality of the early descriptions of Criseyde's appearance. Though the audience may momentarily forget the opening summary of the tale of woe and allow the apotheosis of Criseyde, it cannot allow such sentimentality after Criseyde is humanly revealed in the dialogue and action of the following four books. The narrator is even forced to recognize Criseyde's less than divine nature and the focus of his final description of her indicates his recognition. He attempts to describe Criseyde with a physical measure because he realizes that the moral measure he applied earlier has proved inaccurate:

Criseyde mene was of hire stature,  
Therto of shap, of face, and ek of chere,  
Ther myghte ben no fairer creature.  
And ofte tyme this was hire manere,  
To gon ytressed with hire heres clere  
Doun by hire coler at hire bak bihynde,  
Which with a thred of golde she wolde bynde.  
(V, 806-812)

When he does attempt a moral evaluation of Criseyde, he is careful to avoid casting any angelic shadow and includes a weakness, a qualifier, and an ambiguous verb; but even so he despairs of making any final judgment. The description degenerates into a statement concerned with



a physical fact which is totally unrelated to his line of thought but which allows him an escape from any final comment on Criseyde's moral character:

She sobre was, ek symple, and wys withal,  
 The best ynorisshed ek that myghte be,  
 And goodly of hire speche in general,  
 Charitable, estatlich, lusty, and fre;  
 Ne nevere mo ne lakked hire pite;  
 Tendre-herted, slydyng of corage;  
 But trewely, I kan nat telle hire age.  
 (V, 820-826)

Louis Haselmayer has pointed out that the portraits in Book V. adhere to the rhetorical convention, effictio.<sup>13</sup> But he has not adequately accounted for the artistic touch Chaucer gives the convention. In the case of Criseyde, we are clearly invited to compare the earlier and later portraits, as we have done, and to reflect upon the reason for the change and its meaning to the narrative. In the earlier portrait the narrator tries to relate physical beauty and moral beauty and, in a way common to courtly lovers who felt that the apprehension of physical beauty in the woman and pursuit of her could be spiritually ennobling, he assumes there is spiritual grace where there is physical gracefulness. Troilus, I might add, makes the same assumption, and quite clearly is ennobled by it: the haughty, confirmed bachelor turns humble, devotee of love. Though the effect of Troilus' assumption is his moral enlightenment, the assumption is, nevertheless, a false one. The narrator, not unlike Troilus, is faced with the realization that



all things human--even the most beautiful--are tainted and that ideality is only conceptually conceivable--not experientially observable. In the case of Blanche, not only her death but the voice of her idealization sustain her apotheosis. Chaucer does not undertake the idealization himself. Blanche's character is not tested in experience but is distanced from our direct view throughout the narrative. The humanized touches of her portrait--her non-adherence to courtly tests of chivalry, and her oversized hips--stress the human base of her ideality but they never personalize her to the point where she ceases functioning as a symbol of womanly noblesse. She is humanized in ways which present no challenge to her ideality: the size of her hips finally has very little to do with the magnitude of her spirit.

Criseyde's humanization is far more expansive: we not only imagine her presence from a distance but we see her actions and hear her voice. The idealistic illusion is burst and the narrator is left with the sort of hopeless realization which comes to Dido in her complaint: that order is violated in a world where appearance does not correspond with reality:

Allas! what harm doth apparence,  
Whan hit is fals in existence!  
(Hous of Fame, I, 265-266)

In a similar line of argument about the change that occurs in the narrator's attitude toward Criseyde,





E. T. Donaldson compares descriptions of Criseyde with those of May in The Merchant's Tale:

Yet Chaucer's descriptions of the two women do share something of the same technique, for since in both cases the women themselves will be ultimately revealed as untrue to their beholder.<sup>14</sup>

Though Donaldson recognizes the nature of both Troilus' and the narrator's disillusionment, he does not suggest that the romantic vision may be the first step to the religious vision. The narrator's descriptions of Criseyde suggest that he has been capable of conceptualizing ideality. Like Troilus he is to learn that ideality is only inculcated in a religious object. The poem ends appropriately with praise of the only woman who is capable of sustaining and augmenting his understanding of ideality: .

So make us, Jesus, for this mercy digne,  
For love of mayde and moder thyn begigne.  
(V, 1868-1869)

With a consciousness and an imaginative capacity for ideality, though first misapplied to a secular subject, the narrator is moved to a subject that can sustain religious rhetoric--the Mother of God.

In my study of *Anelida*, I attempted to consider the difficulties in characterization Chaucer encountered in blending narrative comment with lyrical complaint. Wolfgang Clemen has also noted a disunity in the poem which though not directly relevant to our study of *Anelida*, is of importance in considering the artistic



complexity of Criseyde's character. He argues that there is an incongruity between the epic and lyric modes of Anelida and Arcite.<sup>15</sup> It is not easy to see any real connection between Anelida's unfortunate love affair and the affairs of state. The war only provides a plot explanation of Anelida's presence in the town and a somewhat ominous background to her ill-fated love. There is no connection between her love affair and the lengthy description of Theseus which opens the narrative. Perhaps Chaucer was working toward some resolution of the love and war themes, the epic and the lyric modes, since Anelida plans to make a sacrifice to Mars, the god who has been invoked by the poet for inspiration.

In the case of Criseyde the epic context of her love has meaning. That is, the epic background of the tale which places the love in the broader context of the fall of Troy figures both in our understanding of plot and theme. Quite obviously Criseyde's love affair from its inception to dissolution is determined by events in the war. Under more stable political conditions, Criseyde may not have decided to love Troilus but she certainly would not have betrayed him. The tragedy of Troilus and Criseyde is related thematically to the tragedy of Troy. As G. L. Kittredge has so aptly pointed out:

The fate which darkens the love of Troilus and Cressida is strangely intensified (in our apprehension of it) by the impending doom of Troy. This is no mere rhetorical



analogue--no trick of symbolism. Their drama is an integral part of the great Trojan tragedy. They are caught in the wheels of that restless mechanism which the gods have set in motion for the ruin of the Trojan race.<sup>16</sup>

Chaucer, then, is able to unite the epic and lyric qualities of Troilus and Criseyde by transposing the political chaos and the failure of human love--the vanity of all human wishes--with the final Providential understanding and peace of Troilus.

As in Anelida and Arcite character in Troilus and Criseyde is developed through narrative commentary, action and direct address. Only here the narrator is highly biased. Therefore, when there is a disparity between his description and the actual event, we can interpret it in terms of the narrator's romantic vision. Though he claims he is unable to romanticize:

Wherefore I nyl have neither thank ne blame  
Of al this werk, but prey yow mekely,  
Disblameth me, if any word be lame,  
For as myn auctour seyde, so sey I.  
Ek though I speeke of love unfelyngly,  
No wondre is, for it nothyng of newe is;  
A blynd man kan nat juggen wel in hewis.  
(II, 15-21)

he does, nevertheless, visualize his heroine romantically. Since narrative comment in Anelida and Arcite is to be taken objectively, we are left with a meaningless incongruity between the idealized Anelida of the narrative and the personalized, self pitying Anelida of the complaint. In the case of Criseyde's descriptions, we are always conscious of the highly subjective vision of





the person describing her, and this, as E. T. Donaldson observes, adds to her complexity:

The difficulty with Criseyde. . . is that she is not seen from any consistently detached, objective point of view: she is seen almost wholly from the point of view of a narrator who is so terribly anxious to have us see only the best in her and not to see the worst even when it is staring both us and him in the face, that when he is afraid we will see something he doesn't want us to see, he plunges in to muddy up the water so that we can't see anything clearly.<sup>17</sup>

In Book I. the narrator does not need "to muddy up the water". The actions which he attributes to Criseyde support his idealization of her. The descriptive qualities "angelik" and "in gret penaunce,/ For of hire lif she was ful sore in drede" (ll. 95-96) are illustrated in her humble request to Ector:

This lady, which that alday herd at ere  
Hire fadres shame, his falsnesse and tresoun,  
Wel neigh out of hir wit for sorwe and fere,  
In widewes ewes habit large of samyt broun,  
On knees she fil biforn Ector adown;  
With pitous vois, and tendrely wepynge,  
His mercy bad, hirselves excusynge,  
(I, 106-112)

Ector's response to Criseyde affirms the narrator's idealization in our eyes. He can be considered no mean judge of character and, apparently convinced of her integrity, he offers his help. The narrator also does not muddy the soliloquy of Criseyde in Book III., but presents it uninterruptedly, allowing Criseyde's own voice to argue its genuineness.

There are moments in Book I. when Criseyde seems almost human, and these are moments when the audience



begins to suspect the narrator's biased sentiment for her. Her reactions to Troilus' probing, male eyes are convincing in a way that humanizes the very qualities the narrator has used to describe her--in "ful sore drede" and her "ful assured lokyng":

To Troilus right wonder wel with alle  
 Gan for to like hire mevyng and hire chere,  
 Which somdel deignous was, for she let falle  
 Hire look a lite aside in swich manere,  
 Ascaunces, "What! may I nat stonden here?"  
 And after that hire lokyng gan she lighte,  
 That nevere thoughte hym seen so good a syghte.  
 (I, 288-294)

In Book II, Criseyde is placed before our eyes, and as she is given more and more personality her idealization suffers in the audience's eyes though not in the narrator's. She proclaims her sexuality: "I am naught religious!" (II, 759), and acknowledges a certain worldliness that is less than "angelik": "Who yaf me drynke?" (II, 651). Her first speech in the narrative exposes her jocular side which the narrator has not forewarned us of, but which helps give Criseyde human form. Pandarus engages her in a game of wit:

"Ye, nece, yee faren wel the bet,  
 If God wol, al this yeer," quod Pandarus;  
 "But I am sory that I have yow let  
 To herken of youre book ye preysen thus.  
 For Goddes love, what seith it, telle it us!  
 Is it of love? O, som good ye me leere!"  
 "Uncle," quod she, "youre maistresse is nat here."  
 (II, 92-98)

Criseyde has a capacity for the dramatic. The narrator takes her reaction to Pandarus' proposal quite seriously:



And she began to breste a-wepe anoon,  
 And seyde, "Allas, for wo! Why nere I deed?  
 For of this world the feyth is al agoon.  
 Allas! what sholden straunge to me doon,  
 Whan he, that for my beste frend I wende,  
 Ret me to love, and sholde it me defende?  
 (II, 408-413)

But Criseyde's next actions reveal the depth of her earlier protest:

Tho fillen they in other tales glade,  
 Tyl at the laste, "O good em," quod she tho,  
 "For his love, which that us bothe made,  
 Tel me how first ye wisten of his wo.  
 Woot noon of it but ye?"--He seyde, "No".  
 "Kan he wel speke of love?" quod she; "I preye  
 Tel me, for the bet me shal purveye."  
 (II, 498-504)

Criseyde's character is anything but static. Still, her development is less organic than fully dependent upon her narrator's vision. The illusionary ideality which the narrator attributes to her is repeatedly challenged by her own speech and action. Changes in her character are more important as indication of a more realistic vision on the part of the narrator and Troilus than they are as any cause and effect explanation of her behavior. In short, Criseyde is a character who is not to be considered independently of her narrator and lover, and Chaucer makes this quite clear by dropping her before the end of the tale and by not attempting to organically relate causes for all her behavior.

If, then, the disunity between the lyric and narrative development of Criseyde's character is artistically purposive, what can be said about the stylistic





incongruity within Criseyde's own speech? Can it be explained as a functioning means of developing Criseyde's character? These questions have been answered by Charles Muscatine in his important study, Chaucer and the French Tradition. He notes that Criseyde's speech fluctuates between the high and low style and he suggests a reason for it:

In terms of style, she speaks in both idioms. In terms of the poem's pattern of meaning, she represents the many-sided complexity of the earthly fact whose mixture of qualities provides to each beholder the abstraction that he takes for the thing itself. Seen dynamically, in the alternating dominance and recession of each of her various qualities as surrounding conditions evoke them, she represents earthly instability. She is as the world is and goes as the world goes.<sup>18</sup>

The dramatic quality of the fluctuation is convincingly human. Criseyde uses words to fit her sentiment and it is not surprising that she can both poeticize an aubade in the idiom of love,

To that Criseyde answerde right anon,  
And with a sik she seyde, "O herte deere,  
The game, ywys, so ferforth now is gon,  
That first shal Phebus fallen fro the spere,  
And everich egle ben the dowves feere,  
And everi roche out of his place sterte,  
Er Troilus out of Criseyde's herte.  
(III, 1492-1498)

and chide Pandarus in the idiom of a wench:

And ner he com, and seyde, "How stant it now  
This mury morwe? Nece, how can ye fare?"  
Criseyde answerede, "Nevere the bet for yow,  
Fox that ye ben! God yeve youre herte kare!  
God help me so, ye caused al this fare,  
Trowe I," quod she, "for al youre wordes white.  
O, whoso seeth yow, knoweth yow ful lite."  
(III, 1562-1568)



Criseyde's use of the two styles is not only humanly convincing but is convincing in terms of Criseyde's own character. Not unlike her father she follows the course which will bring her security. Her words and actions are determined totally by the immediacy of her situation, but as the narrator suggests in the words "as she mente" they lack permanence and fruition:

And treweliche, as writen wel I fynde,  
That al this thyng was seyde of good entente;  
And that hire herte trewe was and kynde  
Towardes hym and spak, right as she mente,  
And that she starf for wo neigh whan she wente  
And was in purpos evere to be trewe:  
Thus writen they that of hire werkes knewe.  
(IV, 1415-1421)

The disunities of Criseyde's character, then, between narrative comment and personal address and action; and between high and low style within Criseyde's speech, function in developing our view of an extremely complex character, at once a separate entity and a figment of the narrator's imagination; at once a convincing personality and a symbol of earthly mutability.

Like Dido, the Criseyde of the earlier books is a figment of her narrator's romantic imagination, but as the narrative progresses and the narrator realizes that he must tell the "double sorwe", the narrative comment serves the purpose of defusing the immediacy of the tale and distancing it in the past. Though the narrator finds dismissing Criseyde very difficult, he is nevertheless able to do it, and he comforts himself in



general moralization, having abstracted Criseyde's personality to its conceptual equivalent of earthly mutability.

In Book I. the narrator admits to being a romantic non-participant in love:

For I, that God of Loves servauntz serve,  
 Ne dar to Love, for myn unliklynesse,  
 Preyen for speed, al sholde I therfore sterve,  
 So fer am I from his help in derknesse.  
 But natheless, if this may don gladnesse  
 To any lovere, and his cause availle,  
 Have he my thonk, and myn this travaille!  
 (I, 15-21)

Having admitted his bias, we are not surprised by the events of the narrative that he chooses to emphasize--one entire book to the consummation--nor by what qualifications he makes:

For I sey nought that she so sodeynly  
 Yaf hym hire love, but that she gan enclyne  
 To like hym first. . .  
 (II, 673-676)

Criseyde is safely guarded from any violation in timing her love. Another qualifying anti-climax shields her when her acceptance of Troilus' love might risk appearing improper:

So wis he was, she was namore afered,--  
 I mene, as fer as oughte be requered.  
 (III, 481-482)

Not unlike Gulliver but with no admission of intent--"I eluded many of [the King of Brobdignag's] questions and gave to every point a more favorable turn by many degrees than the strictness of truth would allow."<sup>19</sup>--the narrator





of Troilus and Criseyde artfully declines to speculate upon certain of Criseyde's motives, though he has been more than willing to in the past. When Pandarus invites Criseyde to dinner her reaction is one of concern and probably hope for Troilus' attendance. At least she decides to attend and she admits to Troilus in bed that she has yielded to him long before this meeting (III, 1210-1211). Still the narrator refuses to consider her response to Pandarus' announcement that Troilus would not be there:

Nought list myn auctour fully to declare  
 What that she thoughte whan he seyde so,  
 That Troilus was out of towne yfare,  
 As if he seyde therof soth or no.  
 (III, 575-578)

The narrator even gives her extended stay--presumably including her actions therein--a kind of cosmic sanction:

But O Fortune, executrice of wyrdes!  
 O influences of thise hevenes hye!  
 Soth is, that under God ye ben oure hierdes,  
 Though to us bestes ben the causes wrie.  
 This mene I now, for she gan homward hye,  
 But execut was al bisyde hire leve  
 The goddes wil; for which she moste bleve.  
 (III, 617-623)

The narrative blurring, emphasis, and sanction function as what Charles Muscatine has termed "controlled ambiguity".<sup>20</sup> Our sympathies are directed in a way we cannot fully comprehend, but we are not given enough facts to re-direct them. Nevertheless, the ambiguity does not move us to any simple response to Criseyde, and at times the narrator's intervention raises more questions than it



answers. For example, the narrator's assurance that Criseyde's love was not sudden seems unnecessary since we have no reason to suspect it was. Furthermore, her deliberations in choosing to accept Troilus as her lover remove her from any charges of simple infatuation. Or, the narrator's refusal to attribute motives to Criseyde's attendance at Pandarus' dinner, referred to above, requires no apology since we are not in a position to think that Criseyde was scheming anything. What becomes clear is that Chaucer is toying with the narrator's shield and at the same time complicating our understanding of Criseyde.

The interdependence between Criseyde and her narrator gives her character a perspective greater than her own particular condition might allow. Morton Bloomfield has noted quite correctly that the poem articulates a point of view removed from that of the characters of the story.<sup>21</sup> The narrator as a Christian man, living in the present, has a comprehensive vision that allows him to interpret the meaning of Criseyde's character. He keeps the story from becoming too personalized, or as Robert Jordan points out:

. . .the individuated instance is part of the broad view, preconceived, clearly specified, and variously reiterated in the course of the narrative--namely, that the purpose is to represent, through the experiences of Troilus, the universal truth of love. Criseyde's primary role is to demonstrate an important aspect of that truth, the fact that human love is subject to chance and change, the inescapable limitations of the mortal condition.<sup>22</sup>



The summary the narrator makes at the beginning of the poem shades all that follows, and on the particular occasion of their greatest bliss, the narrator reminds us of the temporality of human love:

But al to litel, weylaway the whyle,  
Lasteth swich joye, ythonked be Fortune.  
(IV, 1-2)

Even with his comprehensive view, however, he is not a detached observer. Not only does he love Criseyde, but he never de-values human love itself. When Criseyde submits sexually to Troilus, the narrator makes a generalized comment which upholds human love, though his foreknowledge of the "double sorwe" might give him reason to deny it any value:

For love of God, take every womman heede  
To werken thus, if it comth to the neede.  
(III, 1224-1225)

The narrator's view, then, is both extra-worldly (Christian) and worldly (courtly). He recognizes the limitations of all things human including the doomed love of Troilus and Criseyde, but he does not negate their value. With an ambivalent view as a gentle disciple of God and Venus, he is incapable of simple judgments. He is not even capable of condemning Criseyde who clearly violates both God's Law and Venus' Law. In Book IV. as the sway of events directs him to judgments, he takes a comforting detour. He realizes that a castigation of Criseyde who was cheated of her love by





chance and change and who herself is much like Fortune, is a repudiation of the human condition, so he decides to de-personalize her character, to make it doctrinal, but first he admits:

And now my penne, allas with which I write,  
Quaketh for drede of that I moste endite.  
For how Criseyde Troilus forsook,  
Or at the leeste, how that she was unkynde.  
(IV, 12-16)

This anti-climax gives away the narrator's humanitarian spirit. He is no dogmatist capable of clear religious judgment; nor does he adhere strictly to the courtly code which demanded fidelity. When he feels himself cornered, he attempts the most graceful escape possible--euphemism. Donaldson has observed:

Euphemism is successful only when it stands in the place of a strong statement; when it follows the strong statement that it purports to replace, as it does here, it accomplishes no more than an anti-climax.<sup>23</sup>

The judgments the narrator feels compelled to make are as muddy as possible:

Ne me list this sely womman chyde  
Forther than the storye wol devyse.  
(V, 1093-1094)

Filtered through the narrator's eyes the story is offered as universal commentary on love without losing the poignancy of the tragic love of Troilus and Criseyde. Indeed the narrator heightens the particular tragedy by compressing the time sequence in Book V. and thereby making Criseyde's fall appear more rapid than it actually is. "Chaucer has arranged the sequence of events in the



narrative in the order which will give the maximum effectiveness to the tragic scene."<sup>24</sup> Finally the ambiguity surrounding Criseyde's actions is clarified only from a divine vantage point. The audience, like Troilus, is confused by Criseyde's duplicity, but as the narrator withdraws with Troilus from the proximity of the individuated Criseyde, we begin to understand in a general way that even the vanity of human wishes is not without Providential guidance: Troilus has been elevated by his suffering and love for Criseyde. Feeling for Criseyde is reduced once she is abstracted to symbolize change. The narrator associates her with Fortuna:

. . . clene out of his lady grace,  
And on hir wheel she sette up Diomede,  
(IV, 10-11)

Her own last words make the association complete:

But al shal passe, and thus I take my leve.  
(V, 1085)

The association made, the narrator is able to dismiss Criseyde as an idea, and is not required to condemn the person whom he obviously loved. He turns to Troilus' ascendance above all things worldly, but he is not moved to completely accept Troilus' vision. He can moralize and censure human weakness but he cannot forget its beauty. Life runs in his adjectives-- "yonge, fresshe folkes" and "floures faire". He does not paint as bleak a picture of the world as a man bent on



moralization might. He recognizes the transiency of human life but he acknowledges its beauty as well:

O yonge, fresshe folkes, he or she,  
 In which that love up groweth with youre age,  
 Repeyreth hom fro worldly vanyte,  
 And of youre herte up casteth the visage  
 To thilke God that after his ymage  
 Yow made, and thynketh al nys but a faire  
 This world, that passeth soone as floures faire.  
 (V, 1835-1841)

One cannot help but notice the ambiguity of the word 'faire' in the sixth line, but even without defining it--and Chaucer certainly meant the ambiguity--it seems clear that the narrator does not feel that human love is necessarily opposed to divine love.

The final topic we should consider and one that has been referred to in other parts of this study is the relationship between Criseyde's role as illustration and her role as representation. Chaucer achieves a rather fine blend of doctrine and mimetic realism in his portrayal of Criseyde. I have already noted her doctrinal identification with Fortuna, and her illustrative function as comment on the instability of human love, but I have not adequately considered her human qualities.

Dramatically Criseyde is conceived in human form. Her voice is convincing and her actions for the most part are humanly probable. R. A. Jelliffe has even pointed out the change occurring in Criseyde after her removal from Troy and argues that this, more effectively





than any narrative commentary, works for Criseyde's defense:

Laughter had been quenched in her; and this fact brings home to us as almost nothing else could the desolation of the days in store. Sick with self contempt, pitiably conscious of the irremediable wrong she had done, Criseyde had no longer any heart for laughter.<sup>25</sup>

And it is easy to see the change Jellife has observed.

With our earlier recollection of Criseyde's joking with Pandarus, Diomede's description accentuates our understanding of Criseyde's suffering:

But natheles, this ilke Diomede  
 Gan in hymself assure, and thus he seyde:  
 "If ich aright have taken of yow hede,  
 Me thynketh thus, O lady myn, Criseyde,  
 That syn I first honde on youre bridel leyde,  
 Whan ye out come of Troi by the morwe,  
 Ne koude I nevere sen yow but in sorwe.  
 (V, 870-875)

Like the Wife of Bath who is able to mouth marriage doctrine that she reasonably cannot be expected to know and make it sound convincingly her own, Criseyde draws philosophical argument from Boethius and makes it her own. When she speaks doctrine, it is done with her own voice:

"O God!" quod she, "so worldly selynesse,  
 Which clerkes callen fals felicitee,  
 Imedled is with many a bitternesse!  
 Ful angwissous than is, God woot," quod she,  
 "Condicoun of veyn prosperitee;  
 For either joies comen nought yfeere,  
 Or elles no wight hath hem alwey here.  
 "O brotel wele of mannes joie unstable!  
 With what wight so thow be, or how thow pleye,  
 Either he woot that thow, joie, art muable,  
 Or woot it nought; it mot ben oon of tweye.  
 Now if he woot it nought, how may he seye



That he hath verray joie and selynesse,  
That is of ignoraunce ay in derknesse?

"Now if he woot that joie is transitorie,  
As every joie of worldly thyng mot flee,  
Than every tyme he that hath in memorie,  
The drede of lesyng maketh hym that he  
May in no perfit selynesse be;  
And if to lese his joie he sette a myte,  
Than semeth it that joie is worth ful lite.

"Wherefore I wol diffyne in this matere,  
That trewely, for aught I kan espie,  
Ther is no verray weele in this world heere.  
(III, 813-836)

Criseyde's philosophical speculation is derived from Boethius, III, pr. 4, but it is blended to suit the limitations of her worldly vision. Ida Gordon has pointed out the very important difference between Criseyde and Boethius, a difference which reflects Criseyde's own sentiment, making the speech probable for her:

Criseyde's speech is consistent with her character as we have seen it, for example, in her long soliloquy on the pros and cons of entering into a love relationship with Troilus (II, 701-812), and in her remarks on the falsity of this world (II, 410 and 420). In her mouth the Boethian arguments contribute to the impression of her cautious attitude to life, her excessive fear of being let down. But it is typical of the close connection there is in the poem between character and moralistic meaning that Criseyde's speech here reveals that her understanding does not go beyond the worldly view.<sup>26</sup>

Gordon contrasts Criseyde's attitude with Lady Philosophy's:

The arguments by which Criseyde reaches this conclusion, are those used by Philosophia in her "lyghtere medicynes" to show how, even on the worldly level only, it must be clear that worldly happiness is not true happiness; but Philosophia does not conclude therefore, as Criseyde does, that there is no true happiness in this world: in her "strengere medicynes" she explains what true happiness



in this world is.<sup>27</sup>

Criseyde never understands the meaning of true happiness. Unlike Troilus who makes the mistake of overvaluing human love by endowing it with spiritual significance, Criseyde does not give human love its due. She makes the mistake of undervaluing human love and fidelity by exaggerating her own security and by not aspiring to anything beyond her own immediate vision of realization. Her reason is totally unimaginative: she weighs only what is, never what might or what ought to be. She can cope with the realities at hand but she can never hope herself beyond them. And what her voice does to Boethius is illustration of this worldly view.

Her love dream is also a deft touch of humanization. In The Hous of Fame Chaucer considers the various causes of dreams and includes among them the probable source of Criseyde's:

Or that the cruel lyf unsofte  
Which thise ilke lovers leden  
That hopen over-muche of dreden,  
That purely her impressions  
Causen hem avisions. . .

(Hous of Fame I, 36-40)

Only Criseyde, however, could dream the love dream she does. She has just seen the handsome knight who loves her and falls asleep on a pleasant night in May to the song of a nightingale. Who can imagine a more romantic setting? But Criseyde's dream is totally unromantic. She dreams that an eagle--which according to medieval





bestiaries was noted for the acuteness of its eyes as symbolic of intellectual vision<sup>27</sup>--tears out her heart and replaces it with his own. We might first note the wild sexuality of the dream which in itself suggests Criseyde's alienation from the courtly code (the woman was not to be ravished, but to be taken when permission was granted); we might see the dream functioning to develop and humanize Criseyde's character. Criseyde is not a romantic or we might expect that her setting would inspire a dream of less violence and animality; of more tenderness and sentimental love. In her dream we see reflected a problem which confronts her throughout the tale: her inability to live within the code of love. Her dream interprets love in terms of reason (the eagle) and raw sexuality (the violence with which the eagle ravishes her). The sensibility of her dream is the same sensibility that can dispose of a love note in a privy. Criseyde's reasoned calculations to love and her willingness to sexually enact her love are also suggested in the dream.

There are countless other ways in which Criseyde's character is personalized, but there are also ways by which her character is expanded into the total meaning of the poem. Certain of the other characters seem almost projections of her. Her father, Calchas, may offer a hereditary explanation for her betrayal since he



shares her weakness and strengths: he too, has abandoned his former loyalties in response to his own acute perceptions of the fate of Troy. His view is as worldly as Criseyde's. Diomedes also seems so much a part of Criseyde at times that he even echoes her voice. He has values not unlike those of Criseyde, only they are exaggerated, and the narrator allows us a direct view of his scheming. He seems at times to be an exaggeration of Criseyde's worst qualities of self interest; a character who can carry the contempt that the narrator refuses to feel for Criseyde. We hear with disgust many of Diomedes's words, but we cannot fail to be haunted by their similarity to Criseyde's. In her first letter to Troilus, Criseyde makes an offer similar to Diomedes's offer to her: "that ye me wolde as youre brother trete" (1. 134):

She thanked hym of al that he wel mente  
Towardes hire, but holden hym in honde  
She nolde nought, ne make hireselven bonde  
In love; but as his suster, hym to plese,  
She wolde ay fayn, to doon his herte an ese.  
(II, 1221-1225)

Note the similarity of Diomedes's vow of love to Criseyde's:

. . .I am, and shal ben ay,  
God helpe me so, while that my lyf may dure,  
Youre owene aboven every creature.  
(V, 152-154)

Criseyde states:

But herte myn, withouten more speche,  
Both to me trewe, or ellis were it routhe;  
For I am thyn, by God and by my trouthe!  
(III, 1510-1513)



Both Diomedes and Criseyde are beautiful people in a physical sense, but they share the fate of a corrupt world where appearance does not reflect reality. The narrator observing Diomedes's sinister actions, is able to vent some of his contempt:

This Diomedes, of whom yow telle I gan,  
 Goth now withinne hymself ay arguynge  
 With al the sleghte, and al that evere he kan,  
 How he may best, with shortest tarynge,  
 Into his net Criseydes herte brynge.  
 To this entent he koude nevere fyne;  
 To fisshen hire, leyde out hook and lyne.  
 (V, 771-777)

But a less biased narrator might have considered Criseyde's actions sinister too.

Chaucer, then, in creating Criseyde achieves both an illustration and a representation of rare artistic blend. She is not an organic character growing from the seeds of motivations in the narrative into a convincingly human impression. The narrator focuses only on moments which are of particular importance to her broad doctrinal meaning--her decision to love, the consummation, and the separation. The sequence of her appearance is highly structured to effect an impression of the insufficiency of worldly values, or as Muscatine states:

He [Chaucer] sees the imperfection inherent in any mode of life--be it practical or idealistic--wherein the end itself is earthly joy, and hence wherein the prize may be washed away by the same tide that brought it in.<sup>29</sup>

That is not to say, however, that the narrator does not





attach a certain poignancy to human love because of its very imperfections. He only comes to recognize that there is something perfect.

From Blanche, a symbolized woman, we have moved to Criseyde, who is both symbol and representation. By the time Chaucer created his Canterbury women, his technique had clearly become even more mimetic. In The Nature of Narrative, Scholes and Kellogg comment upon the characterization of the Wife of Bath:

[She] is a creature with roots in the illustrative tradition modified by the first stirrings of the wave of representationalism which culminated in the realistic European novel.<sup>30</sup>

The Wife of Bath is presented directly in her own voice without the interpolation and blurring of a highly complex narrator. We read her character in the immediate experience of her words. Though she seems as psychologically real as Criseyde, I doubt anyone would be willing to say she is quite so artistically complex.



## FOOTNOTES

### Introduction

<sup>1</sup>See D. W. Robertson, Preface to Chaucer and Robert Jordan, Chaucer and the Shape of Creation.

<sup>2</sup>Heer, The Medieval World, 309-324.

<sup>3</sup>Jackson, The Literature of the Middle Ages, 94.

<sup>4</sup>Heer, The Medieval World, 322.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 309-324.

### Chapter I

<sup>1</sup>Lowes, Geoffrey Chaucer and the Development of His Genuis, 100.

<sup>2</sup>Lowell, Conversations on Some of the Old Poets, 91.

<sup>3</sup>Lewis, The Allegory of Love, 169.

<sup>4</sup>Kittredge, Chaucer and His Poetry, 64.

<sup>5</sup>Baker, "Imagery and Structure in Chaucer's Book of the Duchess", SN, XXX, 24.

<sup>6</sup>Clemen, Chaucer's Early Poetry, 26.

<sup>7</sup>All references to The Book of The Duchess, The Hous of Fame and Troilus and Criseyde are to the Appleton-Century-Crofts-edition edited by Albert C. Baugh. References to Anelida and Arcite are to the Riverside edition edited by F. N. Robinson.



- <sup>8</sup>Harrison, "Medieval Rhetoric in The Book of The Duchess", PMLA, XLIX, 429.
- <sup>9</sup>Kittredge, Chaucer and His Poetry, 48-52.
- <sup>10</sup>Spender, "The Making of a Poem", Critiques and Essays in Criticism, 25.
- <sup>11</sup>Wimsatt, "The Apotheosis of Blanche in The Book of the Duchess", JEGP, LXVI, 28.
- <sup>12</sup>Bronson, "The Book of the Duchess Re-opened", PMLA, LXVII, 868.
- <sup>13</sup>Patch, On Rereading Chaucer, 29.
- <sup>14</sup>Manning, "Chaucer's Good Faire White: Woman and Symbol", CL X, 97-105.
- <sup>15</sup>Malone, Chapters on Chaucer, 40.
- <sup>16</sup>Jackson, The Literature of the Middle Ages, 158.
- <sup>17</sup>Capellanus, The Art of Courtly Love, 116-143.
- <sup>18</sup>Wimsatt, "The Apotheosis of Blanche in The Book of the Duchess", JEGP, LXVI, 30.
- <sup>19</sup>Ibid., 34-42.
- <sup>20</sup>Ibid., 39.
- <sup>21</sup>Ibid., 38.
- <sup>22</sup>Ibid., 31.
- <sup>23</sup>Capellanus, The Art of Courtly Love, 108.
- <sup>24</sup>E. E. Slaughter, "'Every Vertu at his Reste'", MLN, XLVI, 448-453.





Chapter II

- <sup>1</sup>Baum, "Chaucer's House of Fame", ELH, VIII, 250.
- <sup>2</sup>Muscatine, Chaucer and the French Tradition, 108.
- <sup>3</sup>David, "Literary Satire in the House of Fame", PMLA, LXXV, 336.
- <sup>4</sup>Patch, The Goddess Fortuna in Mediaeval Literature, 112.
- <sup>5</sup>Ruggiers, "The Unity of Chaucer's House of Fame", SP, L, 18-19.
- <sup>6</sup>Bennett, Chaucer's Book of Fame, 26.
- <sup>7</sup>Clemen, Chaucer's Early Poetry, 78.
- <sup>8</sup>Jameson, Francis Bacon: Criticism and the Modern World, 63.
- <sup>9</sup>Dodd, "The System of Courtly Love", Chaucer Criticism II., 6.
- <sup>10</sup>Dodd considers these sins of love in "The System of Courtly Love", Chaucer Criticism II., 6-10.
- <sup>11</sup>Lewis, The Allegory of Love, 4.
- <sup>12</sup>Ibid., 34.
- <sup>13</sup>Shook, "The House of Fame", Companion to Chaucer Studies, 343.
- <sup>14</sup>Ibid., 343.
- <sup>15</sup>Ibid., 342.
- <sup>16</sup>Ibid., 347.
- <sup>17</sup>Ibid., 350.



<sup>18</sup>Koonce, Chaucer and the Tradition of Fame, 120.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 116.

<sup>20</sup>Muscatine, Chaucer and the French Tradition, 109.

### Chapter III

<sup>1</sup>These issues and others are treated in the following articles: Bush, "Chaucer's Corinne", Speculum, IV, 106-107; Pratt, "Chaucer's Use of the Teseida", PMLA, LXII, 604-605; Shannon, "The Source of Chaucer's Anelida and Arcite", PMLA, XXVII, 461-485; Green, "Meter and Rhyme in Chaucer's Anelida and Arcite", UMSE, II, 55-63.

<sup>2</sup>Chaucer, The Works, ed. F. N. Robinson, 304.

<sup>3</sup>Clemen, Chaucer's Early Poetry, 206.

<sup>4</sup>References from Anelida and Arcite are to the Riverside edition.

<sup>5</sup>Clemen, Chaucer's Early Poetry, 200.

<sup>6</sup>Dean, "Chaucer's Complaint", CL, XIX, 9.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 16.

### Chapter IV

<sup>1</sup>See, for example, Curry, "Destiny in Chaucer's Troilus", PMLA, XLV, 129-168.

<sup>2</sup>Ten Brink, "Chaucer's Criseyde", History of English Literature, II, 92.

<sup>3</sup>Cook, "The Character of Criseyde", PMLA, XXII, 536.

<sup>4</sup>Graydon, "Defense of Criseyde", PMLA, XLIV, 177.



- <sup>5</sup>Ibid., 162.
- <sup>6</sup>Root, The Poetry of Chaucer, 105-114.
- <sup>7</sup>Mizener, "Character and Action in the Case of Criseyde", PMLA, LIV, 65.
- <sup>8</sup>Lewis, Allegory of Love, 185.
- <sup>9</sup>Dodd, Courtly Love in Chaucer and Gower, 167.
- <sup>10</sup>Saintonge, "In Defense of Criseyde", MLQ, XV, 313.
- <sup>11</sup>Mizener, "Character and Action in the Case of Criseyde", PMLA, LIV, 68.
- <sup>12</sup>Jordan, Chaucer and the Shape of Creation, 99.
- <sup>13</sup>Haselmayer, "The Portraits in Troilus and Criseyde", PQ, XVII, 222.
- <sup>14</sup>Donaldson, Speaking of Chaucer, 53.
- <sup>15</sup>Clemen, Chaucer's Early Poetry, 197-204.
- <sup>16</sup>Kittredge, Chaucer and His Poetry, 114.
- <sup>17</sup>Donaldson, Speaking of Chaucer, 67.
- <sup>18</sup>Muscatine, Chaucer and the French Tradition, 153.
- <sup>19</sup>Swift, Gulliver's Travels and Other Writings, 107.
- <sup>20</sup>Muscatine, Chaucer and the French Tradition, 155.
- <sup>21</sup>Bloomfield, "Distance and Predestination in Troilus and Criseyde", PMLA, LXXII, 14-26.
- <sup>22</sup>Jordan, Chaucer and the Shape of Creation, 100.





<sup>23</sup>Donaldson, Speaking of Chaucer, 70.

<sup>24</sup>Mizener, "Character and Action in the Case of Criseyde", PMLA, LIV, 77.

<sup>25</sup>Jeliffe, Troilus and Criseyde: Studies in Interpretation, 145.

<sup>26</sup>Gordon, The Double Sorrow of Troilus, 30.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 30.

<sup>28</sup>The Bestiary, 105-108.

<sup>29</sup>Muscatine, Chaucer and the French Tradition,  
132.

<sup>30</sup>Scholes and Kellogg, The Nature of Narrative,  
91.



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